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ABSTRACT

A study examined the relationship between writing activities and historical learning by elementary school students. Subjects in schools in the San Francisco Bay area were drawn from third-grade classrooms from a predominantly working class neighborhood, a mixed fourth-grade class of mostly limited-English-proficient children of immigrants from Southeast Asia, and a fifth-grade class in a predominantly White, middle-class school. A history curriculum was developed especially for the project and consisted of multiweek units that provided language arts instruction as well as in-depth historical study. A group of 16 students from each class were chosen to reflect the socioeconomic mix of the school. Data included baseline interviews, writing products, student journals, and taped student-teacher conferences. Results indicated that (1) third-grade students already had a store of information and mental images about historical topics; (2) fourth-grade students had a coherent sense of chronology that functioned independently of dates and historical time concepts; (3) students varied greatly in their understanding of the term "history"; (4) changes in understandings of "history" differed significantly among the three groups of students; (5) a majority of the limited-English-proficient fifth graders did not manage to see the world through the eyes of a person from the historical time period in any meaningful sense of the term; and (6) successful perspective-taking among students in the middle-class fifth-grade classroom involved construction of explanation as well as the description of point of view. (Contains 48 references.) (RS)

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FINAL REPORT

WRITING TO LEARN HISTORY IN THE INTERMEDIATE GRADES

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: THE WRITING TO LEARN HISTORY PROJECT

The Writing to Learn History Project at the University of California, Berkeley examined the relationship between writing activities and historical learning by elementary school students. It was especially concerned about the value of writing activities to facilitate historical thinking. It defined historical thinking as the ability to empathize with people of other times and cultures; to see relationships, including causal connections, over time; to formulate concepts of historical time; and to distinguish between the past (everything that ever happened) and history (what we make of it). The project was a multi-year undertaking, including an initial curriculum development phase and three years of data collecting. This is a report of the project's activities.

It was once assumed that developmental constraints severely limited children's historical reasoning. Studies by Peel (1965, 1967), Hallam (1966, 1967, 1972), and others (Stokes, 1970; Lodwick, 1972) raised serious doubts about childrens' ability to engage in formal operational thinking with history materials before late adolescence. Children seemed to reach that stage at a later age in historical than in math and science reasoning. Hallam's subjects did not attain formal operational thinking in history until age 16, although Piaget's subjects had reached that level by age 11 to 12. Researchers in the Peel-Hallam tradition assumed that hypothetical and deductive thinking that was as necessary for historical thinking as it was for mathematical and scientific reasoning.

More recently, researchers have questioned whether Piagetian categories are appropriate for describing historical thinking. Kennedy (1983) found very weak relationships between measures of historical understanding and developmental level. Historical thinking, according to Booth (1980, 1984), is not primarily deductive thinking. Fischer (1984) has called it "adductive thinking," to distinguish it from both deductive and inductive reasoning. Researchers proceeding from knowledge-based conceptions of cognition have also questioned the application of Piagetian theory to historical thinking. Levstik and Pappas (1987) suggested that knowledge differences rather than global constraints may account for age-related patterns in responses to historical questions. While this research suggested that historical thinking is possible at a younger age than had once been assumed, it has not necessarily established the lower age limits for historical thinking.

As recent reviews of research in the field indicate, the literature on the historical learning of young children is quite limited (Downey & Levstik, 1989, 1991). Much of what does exist has focused on children's conception of time. Research on language development indicates that children learn the distinctions between past, present, and future early in childhood (Wells, 1981, 1985; Harner, 1982). Children begin to develop an understanding of concepts of historical time by age five (Jahoda, 1963; Thornton & Vukelich, 1988). Until then, concepts of time, whether conventional (clock and calendar) or historical time, have little influence on children's thought (Friedman, 1978). They are capable of estimating how long ago events took place and to place events in chronological sequence by age eight or nine (Friedman, 1978; Bradley, 1947; Oakden & Sturt, 1922). By that age children are also able to use such terms as "a long time

ago" and can place historical dates in correct sequences. Children in British studies could understand by age 9 that Robin Hood lived before their mother's or grandmother's time (Bradley, 1947; but see Applebee, 1978). By age 10 to 12, American students can use more refined labels for historical periods, such as "the Civil War era" (Levstik & Papas, 1987). Levstik and Pappas also found that children by age ten were capable of engaging in modest theory generation about the nature of history. Applebee (1978) suggests that embedding time concepts in narrative presentations helps make them comprehensible to children at a young age.

The above studies support several of the assumptions underlying the Writing to Learn History Project. The students that the project targets presumably are old enough to understand basic concepts of historical time. The Levstik and Pappas study (1987) suggested that at least the older students would be able to distinguish between the past and history. The research on narrative forms of discourse indicated that children of this age could see causal as well as temporal relationships. Unfortunately, the research provided no guidance at all as to the capacity of children to develop historical empathetic identification. Nevertheless, pursuing that line of inquiry seemed to be worth the effort.

METHODOLOGY

Project Overview

The project consisted of three phases. The start-up or curriculum-development phase began in January 1991, with the development of an experimental third-grade curriculum that focused on the native Americans of the Bay Area. The curriculum materials for each subsequent year are being created during the summer preceding the data collection year. The

spring of 1991 school semester was also used to develop and pilot test the writing activities and to collect a trial round of data at the school site. The data collection phase began in September 1991 in a third-grade classroom at a single school site. The project was relocated in September 1992 to fourth-grade classrooms at two new sites. It moved again in September 1993 to two fifth-grade sites.

School Sites and Student Populations

During the first year and a half of data collection, the project has used three school sites. The first was a third-grade classroom in Alameda, California, where data collection began in September 1991. The Alameda site, which for the purpose of this project is called Bay School, was selected because it had a diverse student population typical of inner-city schools in the Bay Area. About 10 percent of the students in the research classroom were ESL students. The students were primarily from blue-collar and lower middle class socio-economic backgrounds. A representative sample of twenty-one students were selected initially, with the group eventually pared down to sixteen students. That proved to be the maximum number that one researcher could monitor.

The project was relocated at two school sites in Oakland in September 1992 to take advantage of this district's greater variety of schools and student populations. Oakland's demography ranges from affluent upper-middle class neighborhoods in the Oakland hills to heavily immigrant-impacted areas in the flatlands. Of the two Oakland sites that we selected, the one called Flatland School is a school in a low-income neighborhood that has a substantial number of Limited English Proficient students. A language other than English is spoken in about 80 percent of the homes of the students in the research classroom. Including this school

made it possible to explore the important question being raised in a study by Valdez and Wong (in progress) about whether and under what conditions a writing-oriented approach to learning will work with LEP students. The second school, called Foothills School in this report, draws students from one of Oakland's middle-class, predominantly white neighborhoods. Flatland School was revisited for the first round of data collection at grade five. A school in another middle-class neighborhood of Oakland was selected for the second round at grade five.

Research Procedures

The research subjects in each classroom consisted of a sample of sixteen students. They were selected at the beginning of the school year or semester with the help of the classroom teacher to obtain a sample that is representative of the socio-economic composition of the class and, in so far as possible, of the school. The students in the research sample were treated like and are nearly indistinguishable from the non-sample students, except that they are called out of the classroom for interviews at the beginning and end of each unit.

Each student in the sample was interviewed at the beginning of the unit to collect baseline data. The interviews lasted about 30 minutes and are tape recorded. The first interview each fall included batteries of questions to inventory each student's general historical background knowledge, to find out how the student defines the term history, and to see whether the student identifies empathetically with people who lived in the past. The initial interviews also assessed the students' knowledge about the content of that particular unit of instruction. The interviews at the end of the unit probed for changes in how the students' define history and whether they identify empathetically with the people they have just

studied. These interviews also contained lists of questions to see what students have learned about the unit topic.

The principal researcher was present in the classroom every day during which the units were taught. In the Alameda school, he held periodic conferences with students, assisted with the instruction, and observed the students' performance. In the Oakland schools, he served as the principal teacher during the 75-minute periods of instruction, with the classroom teachers serving either as a co-teachers or assistant. Throughout the year, he divided his time between the two sites, with each unit taught first at Foothills School and then at Flatland School.

The data collection process included holding initial interviews, keeping track of each teacher-student and student-student conference, noting and, when possible, tape recording each major intervention by the teacher, transcribing the tapes, periodically photocopying the students' work to measure progress, keeping the folders on each student orderly and up-to-date, and conducting final interviews. Several kinds of data were collected. They included the following:

1. Baseline interview data
2. Writing products, including drafts of papers and stories
3. Journals kept by the students that describe what they did each day that they were involved in the major writing activities
4. Taped student-teacher conferences
5. Final interviews

The Curriculum

A history curriculum was designed especially for the project. It consisted of multi-week units that provide language arts instruction as well as in-depth historical study. It was based on the *California*

Framework for History-Social Science, which recommends the study of local history at grade 3, California history at grade 4, and United States history at grade 5. An unit on the native Americans of the Bay Area was developed for the third-grade curriculum. This extended unit began in October and lasted through the following February. It was taught regularly, but not every day, during the morning period devoted to writing workshop. The fourth-grade curriculum consisted of two six-week units, one on the Spanish missions and the development of cattle ranching during the Mexican period and the other on the emergence of an industrial-commercial-agricultural economy during and after the California Gold Rush. Each of the two fifth-grade units also lasted six weeks. They focused on the frontier settlement of the American Southwest and on the American Revolution.

The Classroom Setting

The research took place in a natural classroom setting in which students are engaged in historical study involving reading and writing activities. The writing activities ranged from brief exercises in which the students identified artifacts, made brief journal cntries or wrote one-paragraph descriptions to research reports and pieces of historical fiction that require three-to-four weeks to complete. During the period of instruction, the students interacted with a variety of historical materials, including trips to a museum or historical site, artifacts in the classroom, primary and secondary sources, photographs, historical fiction, and folklore. The artifacts and print materials were kept at a History Table that serves as a combined classroom museum, archive, and library. The students used the materials to do research for papers and stories. The

primary sources, historical narratives, and historical fiction available in the classroom also provided the basis for in-class reading assignments.

The students did some writing nearly every day during the course of a unit, with the emphasis on writing as a practical tool for communication. For example, after a drawing activity in which depicted what they thought a native American family and its dwelling looked like, the students were asked to write a caption of a sentence or two to help the teacher understand the drawing. For the major writing assignment, students were free, within certain constraints, to select a topic of their choice. It had to be a topic for which the resources at the History Table provided sufficient information. The students either selected a topic, which was then negotiated, or they submitted a list of three topics and were steered toward the most workable one.

The project's emphasis on historical learning left its stamp on the writing-revision process. A great deal of attention was given to historical authenticity and adequacy of historical detail during the early student-teacher conferences. The phrase used most often during the third-grade unit on native Americans was "does this make Ohlone sense?" Making things more historically authentic also helped to clarify meaning. Weeding out unnecessary prose and making story plots more believable were attended to, but they may not have received as much attention as they traditionally do in writing workshops.

A substantial amount of data was collected at each school site concerning the students' historical knowledge. It consisted of responses in the initial interviews to questions designed to find out what students knew about the topic before instruction and to questions in follow-up interviews about broader aspects of their historical knowledge. A second set of data

was the historical information embedded in their written work, especially in their major three-week projects. A third bank of data consisted of the responses to questions in their final interview. About half of the final interview consisted of questions designed to test in-depth knowledge about each topic.

Measures of Historical Empathy

The ability to view the world through the eyes of someone who lived in the past is an important measure of historical understanding. It is the challenge that confronts all historians and biographers when they come to grips with the motives and aspirations of the people they are writing about. However, there are different kinds of perspective taking. It can be an abstract, intellectual exercise. It is possible to reconstruct why someone acted as he did without investing much of oneself in that person. On the other hand, perspective taking may also involve empathetic identification. Empathy extends beyond the understanding of motives to the development of a conscious, vicarious, personal involvement. It is knowledge that has an affective or intimate dimension. It is understanding with feeling.

Empathetic identification may be the most demanding kind of historical understanding. It requires knowledge about other people and their times as well as a willingness to identify with them. However, this kind of historical understanding may have substantial civic value. Empathetic identification is surely a useful habit of mind for children growing up in a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural society. The question is whether it is within the cognitive range of elementary school children? If so, can it be developed or encouraged through history instruction, especially through instruction that emphasizes writing?

The Writing to Learn History project has assumed that both questions can be answered affirmatively. While there was no research literature that addressed this question, many of the elementary teachers who were informally surveyed were quite confident that ten-year-olds were capable of empathetic identification. Whether writing of any kind can help develop such an ability is another issue entirely. It seemed reasonable to assume that the writing of historical fiction had the best prospect for helping students learn empathetic identification. They would have to create an historical character and place that character in a problem situation that would surely evoke feelings of one sort or another. Perhaps this would help them identify with actual historical characters.

Two of the history units involved students in the writing of historical fiction. The third-grade students in Alameda wrote stories about Ohlone Indian children, to which they devoted a total of seven-to- eight weeks. The Oakland fourth-grade students wrote comparable stories for the California Gold Rush period, spending three-to-four weeks on the task. The challenge was to devise a measure for historical empathy that would indicate whether the students were more empathetic toward Ohlone Indians or Gold Rush Californians after the writing activity than before. The measure that was finally settled upon was a series of three questions included in the initial and final interviews with the students. These were the questions:

1) Did the [historical characters] enjoy living when they did?

2) Would you like to have lived then?

3) Would the [historical characters] enjoy living here today?

The third question seemed to have the most potential for tapping empathetic historical understanding. While the first question asks for

perspective taking, the third question demands something more. It asks the students to consider the possibility that someone else might not enjoy what we enjoy today. To answer it negatively seemed to require an empathetic as well as an intellectual leap backward.

Students Conceptions of History

Another essential element in historical understanding is the ability to distinguish between history and the past. The past is everything that has ever happened. History, as historians use the term, is knowledge constructed about some aspect of the past that someone for some reason considers significant. This is an important distinction for students to be able to make. In the first place, the insight that some things about the past may be construed as more important than others potentially shifts the focus of historical learning from memorization to deciding what is significant about the past and why is it significant? That is an empowering idea, one that can lead students to a more direct involvement in the creative process of making history. It also opens the door to metacognitive learning in which history students become aware of the process in which they are involved when they are learning and creating history. As inviting as this prospect may be, the question remains whether young children can do this and do writing activities help?

The Levstik and Pappas (1987) study cited earlier indicated that young students could make such a distinction. Their sample consisted of twenty-four students, with eight from each of the second, fourth, and sixth grades. The students attended a predominantly middle-class school in a medium sized metropolitan community in the Upper South. Prior to the interview, the students had listened to a historical story, which they were

then asked to retell in their own words and to respond to a set of questions, one of which was "What is 'history?'"

Levstik and Pappas found that more than half of the fourth- and six-grade students, and nearly half of the second-grade students in their sample defined history as the significant past. That is, they could differentiate between history and the past. The major determinants of historical significance were that events and people had to be "famous," "important" or "tragic." The second and fourth graders dwelled more on tragedy and violence; the sixth-graders were more likely to mention the role of historical events in bringing about important changes. Developmental levels may have been reflected in the criteria students gave for judging significance, but not in their capacity to do so.

The Writing to Learn History Project set out to see if similar results could be obtained within a research design that emphasized writing rather than reading and retelling. Data was collected for each of the three groups of students involved in the project to date. They were asked to define the term history at the beginning and at the end of each unit of instruction. The student population differs from the Levstik and Pappas students in two important respects. First, there are major socio-economic-ethnic differences. The third-grade students at Bay School come from a predominantly working class neighborhood. The students at Flatland School, a mixed third-fourth grade class, were also from a working-class background and were mostly the children of immigrants from Southeast Asia. The students at the third school, Foothills School, located in a middle-class Oakland neighborhood, are most comparable to the students in the Levstik and Pappas study. Secondly, the sixth-grade contingent in the Levstik and Pappas study was missing from the California study.

CHAPTER 2:
COLLECTING BASELINE DATA: WHAT DO THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS KNOWN ABOUT HISTORY?

To explore the relationship between writing activities and the development of historical thinking in elementary students, it was essential at the outset to find out what the students involved in the study knew about the past. At the very least, we needed to know what the students knew about the topic under investigation. During the first phase of the project, that topic was the Native Americans of the pre-European contact period of California's history. This chapter describes the process by which we collected baseline data and reviews the project's most important findings.

The research site for the first year of the project was a third-grade classroom at Washington Elementary School in Alameda, California. The school and the classroom had a racially and ethnically heterogeneous mix of students. From the 27 students in the room, we selected 16 to serve as the research cohort. The classroom in which the research took place had several defining characteristics. In the first place, the classroom teacher, James W. Venable, used a whole language approach to teaching reading and writing. The students were involved in a daily writing workshop. Each student's written work was discussed in conferences with students, with the teacher, and with other adults in the classroom as part of a writing-revision-editing-publishing process. The writing included historical information articles and pieces of historical fiction as well as personal narratives. Secondly, the classroom was rich in resources for historical learning, with one or more History Centers located in the

classroom that include either displays of artifacts or books related to the historical topic the students are studying. Finally, reading, writing, and the study of history were integrated. The teacher frequently read aloud from historical narratives and works of fiction during the reading workshop period. The students frequently visited the History Centers to do research for their written pieces.

The project was investigating several dimensions of children's historical thinking and understanding. It was concerned, on one hand, with understandings that relate to history as a way of knowing and which seem to be domain specific. These included understandings about historical time, about temporal and causal relationships, empathetic understandings grounded in the perspectives of people who lived in the past, and an understanding that history itself is constructed knowledge subject to interpretation and change. On the other hand, the project was concerned with what students know about historical people and cultures and with how writing activities reinforce content learnings.

The first phase of data collection focused on what history the children knew at the outset of the study. It focused not only with what factual information the students had already acquired, but how they had acquired it and what conceptual structures they had created to organize and make sense of historical information. The data collection began in September 1991 and was largely completed by October 31. The tapes were transcribed and the data analysis was completed by December 1.

The procedures used to gather and to analyze the data are described below.

I. DATA GATHERING PROCEDURES

A variety of procedures was used to gather data on the historical understanding of the students in the research cohort. These included interviews with individual students, conferences that focused on student writings and drawings, and the analysis of student writings, including log entries, informational pieces, and historical fiction. The several processes are described more fully below.

Initial Student Interviews

At the beginning of the fall semester, the project director conducted interviews with all the students who had been selected as candidates for inclusion in the research cohort. The interview was structured around five sets of questions. The first set was concerned with what the students knew about American Indians, especially the Ohlone tribelet or group that lived in the vicinity of Alameda. We also wanted to know how they had found out what they knew. The next series of questions attempted to find out whether or to what extent the students were capable of adopting a native American perspective. Could they imagine whether Ohlone Indians liked living the way they did? The third set of questions was concerned with their understanding of historical time. These were followed by questions to see whether the students could make rudimentary past-present connections. Finally, the students were asked questions about what the word history meant.

These interviews began with a question about what the students liked best about school. This opening was used to put the children at ease, but it also created an opening for asking questions about their reading preferences. Whatever their response to the initial query, it was followed by questions about how well did they like reading at school and what kind

of stories they most liked to read. All of the students were specifically asked if they had read stories set in the past.

Have you read stories about things that happened long ago? What kind of stories?

If the student did not mention stories about American Indians, they were asked whether they had read such accounts. This steered the interview toward Indians and led to a series of questions about what they knew about Indians. The questions were concerned with some of the more basic and concrete aspects of Indian live, which we assumed children would be most likely to remember.

What kind of homes did they live in?

How did they get their food?

What did they wear?

How did they travel?

These were followed by additional questions that attempted to find out how the students had acquired their knowledge about Indians.

How did you learn what you know about Indians?

Have you ever watched movies about Indians?

Have you read books about Indians?

The first question was open ended and was intended to elicit information about in-school and out-of-school learning experiences. The following questions attempted to find out how much of their knowledge about Indians came from the mass media and from books. The latter question was a rephrasing of the question about stories asked previously. It was an attempt to probe further into the extent to which they had learned about native Americans from books, now that they had had time to think about what they knew about the subject.

These questions were followed by a second set designed to explore whether or to what extent the students could think of native American culture as a reasonable way of life and to imagine themselves living in that time and place. The questions included:

Do you think the Indians liked to live the way they did?

Was that a good time to have lived?

Would you like to have lived the way Indians lived?

What would you find most different?

What would you have especially liked about living then?

A third set of questions tied to find out more about the student's sense of historical time, using the native Americans as the historical referent. Among the questions were these:

How long ago was it when only Indians lived in Alameda?

Was it before or after your mother was a little girl?

Was it before or after your grandmother/great grandmother was a little girl?

The students were next asked two questions designed to explore their ability to make past-present connections. The questions were personal in nature, based on the assumption that connections would be more easy for them to make in terms of their own lives. The first question would also help determine whether they had a personal sense of pastness that differed from their more public or formal sense of history.

Have you done anything that happened long ago?

Did anything happen to you when you were little that changed the way you are now?

The interview was concluded with a final series of questions about the term history.

Do you know what the word history means?

[If yes] What does it mean?

[If no] Have you ever heard the word before?

General Historical Knowledge Interviews

The interviews above were followed up several weeks later with a second round of interviews that focused on the students' more general historical knowledge. The second round of interviews was concerned with what else besides American Indians students knew about the past. It seemed important to devise a map of the students' larger universe of historical knowledge. However, the object was not just to see what historical events or people the students knew about. The purpose was also to see how that information was structured. Was it hooked together chronologically, with one event logically proceeding from another? Was it organized biographically with information hung on the hook of prominent individuals? Was it patterned or more or less isolated information?

Designing the right questions to ask proved more difficult than was anticipated. The very asking of the question tended to contaminate the results. Asking event-centered questions--what do you know about the Civil War?--would necessarily yield event-centered answers. Biography-centered questions would do the same. The researcher would find out what the student knew about the Civil War or Abraham Lincoln, but not how they knew and recalled that information. Consequently, the researchers tried to avoid direct questions, letting the information surface when and as the students proffered it. Direct questions were asked, when asked at all, only after all other avenues seemed exhausted.

As a result, the initial assumption that an inventory of a student's historical knowledge could be put together on the basis of one interview

proved ill founded. Rather, the researcher concluded that such an inventory would have to be put together piecemeal as occasions arose that prompted students to talk about historical people and events. Thus, the interviews that were conducted during the fall of 1991 yielded only the first installment of data for mapping the students' mental historical landscapes.

Student Log Assignment

Student log entries provided another source of information about the students' historical understanding and knowledge of American Indians. The major student log assignment designed to elicit information about what students knew about Indians included the following questions:

1. Have you ever heard the word history?
2. What does the word history mean to you?
4. If yes, what did Alameda look like when Indians lived here?
5. What did the children and Indian adults look like?
6. What did the rest of the world look like?
7. What did the Indians eat and how did they get their food?
8. What did the kids do all day? What did the grown-ups do all day?

The responses the students wrote were very brief, in some instances consisting only of two or three words. Although sparse, the responses were useful. They provided a medium that may have been less threatening to the more timid students than the individual interviews with an adult that have already been described. They also provided an indication of how much learning had taken place since the initial interviews.

Historical Drawing Assignment

The researchers had noticed during the trial run in the Spring of 1991 with a previous class at Washington Elementary School that student drawings also yielded a great deal of information about children's historical knowledge and understanding. Consequently, the students were given an assignment to draw three pictures about American Indian times. The teacher began the activity by asking the students to relax, close their eyes, and go back to the time when Indians lived in Alameda. He asked them to imagine what Alameda looked like in those days. "If you were to go back in time, picture in your mind where the Indians lived in Alameda. Picture what it looked like. Now picture an Indian family in Alameda in front of where they lived, doing something. What do you see them doing? Now go to another part of the world at the same time when Indians lived in Alameda. What do you see? What's happening there? " After visualizing the above, the students were asked to draw pictures of each of the following:

1. What Alameda looked like when Indians lived here.
2. An Indian family in Alameda in front of the place they lived doing something.
3. Another place in the world during the same time.

The product of this assignment were three panels of drawings an 8 1/2x11 page of paper depicting the three scenes called for.

Historical Drawing Interviews

We had also noticed during the earlier trial run that the drawings yielded a much richer harvest of information when also used as the basis for interviews. Consequently, individual interviews were held with the students during which they were asked to describe the scene in the

drawings. The interviewer also asked questions about aspects of the drawings that were unclear.

Personal Narratives

One of the writing tasks assigned early in the school year was to write a personal narrative. The writing that followed from this assignment varied considerably. Some were narratives about trips they had taken, others were articles about pets and parties. In still other instances, the students wrote fiction instead of a personal narrative. But each instance provided an opportunity to probe further into their understanding of what is history. The investigators asked the student if what they wrote was an historical account, and, if it was not, which was invariably the case, they were asked what they could have done to make it historical.

Observations at the History Centers

The introductory activity in the students exploration of Ohlone Indians consisted of visits to history centers. These were tables located in several places in the room that contained reproductions of Ohlone Indian artifacts; seeds, plants, and acorns representing native American foods; and animal pelts from which the Ohlones made clothing or other items. In small groups, the students spent part of a class period each day at each of the five centers. The students were permitted to handle the artifacts on the tables and to try to decide what they might have been used for. One center was rigged with a video camera and microphones to record the interactions between the students as they handled the artifacts and hypothesized about their possible uses. Their guesses and the way they handled the artifacts provided additional insight into their understanding about American Indians.

II. WHAT CHILDREN KNOW ABOUT THE PAST

What did the project learn from the data gathering procedures described above? Principally, the researcher learned that a child's history education is well underway by age eight or nine, that the minds of third-grade students are not a *tabula rasa* in so far as historical information is concerned. In this section of the report, we will describe the kind of historical knowledge the students in the research cohort had acquired by the beginning of the third grade, how they got it, and what some of the implications are for this research project and for their future historical learning.

This is not to say that eight- and nine-year-olds know a great deal of history. By the beginning of the third grade, elementary students in California have had very little formal history instruction. The California History-Social Science Framework, the curriculum recommended by the State Department of Education, was revised in 1987 to place greater emphasis on the teaching of history across the K-12 curriculum. However, its recommendations for grades K-3 are modest, with the students first formal exposure to year-long history instruction coming at grades 4 (state history) and 5 (United States history.) In grades K-2, the Framework calls for teaching about legends, myths, and interesting individuals from the past. Local history receives attention at grade 3. But there is little evidence that teachers in the primary grades pay much attention to the Framework. The time that might be devoted to history or social studies is usually invested in the teaching of reading and writing. Given the lack of attention to history in the primary school curriculum, the researchers did not expect the students to have much historical knowledge at their command.

Knowledge of American Indians

This researcher was somewhat surprised by how much the students in the research cohort knew about American Indians. They knew that Indians inhabited North America prior to the arrival of Europeans, hunted with bows and arrows, and lived in dwellings made of sticks and animal skins. They were aware that Indians lacked modern tools and technology. When asked about the means of transportation used by native Americans, the students responded that Indians mostly traveled on foot or used boats. Their knowledge was highly generalized. None of the students distinguished between different Indian tribes and cultures. And none seemed aware that the Indians' ways of living changed over time. For example, several of the students mentioned that Indians rode horses. In fact, horses were important to only a few American Indian tribes, and only after European colonization. As the interviews progressed, it also became abundantly clear that the students had a highly stereotyped view of Indians.

The image the students had of the American Indian was invariably that of the teepee-dwelling, buffalo-hunting, feathered-headdress-wearing Plains Indians of the 19th century. The strongest part of the image was the Plains Indian head dress. When asked what the native Americans looked like, the students repeatedly mentioned "hair bands," "head bands," and "feathers in their hair." The Plains Indian teepee also occupied a prominent place in that image, as did the bow and arrow. Their visualization of the clothing Indians wore was only a little less distinct. Most of the students described it as "clothes made of skins [or leather]," although two of the students said only that Indians wore "funny looking clothes" and "costumes." The students' drawings produced a more graphic

version of the same stereotypical Plains Indians who appeared in the interviews. In the pictures that the students drew, feathered head dresses, teepees, and bows and arrows abounded.

The Plains Indian stereotype has little correspondence to the life and culture of the native Americans of California. The natives who inhabited California at the time of Spanish contact in the late 18th century differed greatly from their contemporaries on the Great Plains. The Ohlones who inhabited the Bay Area were hunter-gatherers who lived mainly from shellfish, small game, and the produce of the native grasses, oak trees, and berry bushes. They had never seen a buffalo. Their houses were constructed of willow branches and tule reeds taken from the nearby marshes. They were scantily clothed, with women wearing skirts made of tule and animal skin and men clad in breachclouts at most. Children usually went naked. In other words, Indian life and material culture varied from one locale to another. The students' failure to differentiate between different Indian cultures or between Indian cultures over time placed a significant limitation on their historical understanding.

During the second round of interviews, this researcher tried to find out what else the students knew about the past. As explained above, direct questions were kept to a minimum for fear of imposing a structure on the knowledge not of the students' own making. The researcher discovered that, generally speaking, the students' knowledge of history seems to be organized around discrete topics. The most frequently made references were to two prehistoric topics--dinosaurs and cavemen; Indians; cowboys; Christopher Columbus; the Pilgrims; George Washington; and Abraham Lincoln. It became apparent in January, the month of Martin Luther King's birthday observance, that many students had also

added this American leader to the above galaxy of historical actors. These topics seem to be the major historical landmarks in the students' knowledge of the past. The map of their historical understanding seems to be a "topical-graphic" map, one made up of topics for which they have more or less well-defined visual images.

The cowboy images that the students have in mind are as sharply and simply etched as those of the Plains Indians. Cowboys rode horses, wore big hats, and had guns. They spent most of their time chasing, shooting at, and killing Indians. The connection between Indians and cowboys is very strong in the minds of the students. Indians and cowboys are major adversaries. In most instances, the cowboys were the aggressors, attacking Indians. Why, Student C. was asked? "Because it is just the style. They do it." Or as Student G. said, "They liked to ride on horses and they loved to kill. . . . Most of them were bad." "They had guns and chased Indians," said Student F.

The connection between Indians and cowboys appeared at first to be something of a mystery. The students established a much closer link between the two than was ever the case in historical reality. Few cowboys ever encountered hostile Indians, and Indians were seldom harassed by cattlemen. In most areas of the American West, the Indian tribes were removed to reservations before extensive white settlement took place. In armed clashes between Indians and whites, the whites invariably were the soldiers sent out by federal authorities to subdue and remove the Indians.

In time, it became evident that the term "cowboys," as the students were using it, meant something other than cattlemen. In probably most instances, they were thinking of mounted cavalry soldiers. Student H for

example, said he had seen a movie about cowboys fighting Indians. He could not remember the title of the movie, but the plot that he described was that of *Dances with Wolves*, a movie about Indians and soldiers, not cowboys and Indians. This also helps to explain why guns are so prominent in the students' image of the cowboy, while cattle, branding irons, and lariats were conspicuously missing. It may well be that third-graders notions of white Anglo-Americans who lived in the past are as over-generalized and stereotypical as is their image of American Indians.

Indians are also inseparably linked in the students' minds to Christopher Columbus, who is another major monument on their historical landscape. They know that Columbus discovered both the Western Hemisphere and the Indians who lived there. They also seem to know that the Indians of Columbus's time lived much earlier than the Indians who fought with cowboys. This time dimension is implied in many of the students attempts to deal with chronology, as they place Indians both before and after Columbus. However, they do not seem to recognize any physical or cultural differences between the Indians of 15th century San Salvador and those of the 19th century American West. In their minds, presumably, all Indians are Plains Indians.

The image of the Pilgrims is also sharply etched in the students minds. They especially remember the Pilgrims for their distinctive clothing, as the following interview with K. illustrates:

Interviewer: Tell me what they looked like?

Student G: They had these little things that looked like. . . a jumper suit. They had long socks, a hat on, and a bib or something. A square thing that might have been that. . . . An they had black shoes. Women would have low [long] dresses and a little hat on.

All that another student could remember about Pilgrims was that they came to this country in ships and wore "weird kinds of hats." Clothing and headdress, in these students' scheme of things, give both Pilgrims and Indians a major part of their historical identity.

Presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln also loomed large on the students' historical landscape. Washington's importance to them rests mainly on his being the first President. None of the students mentioned his role as commander of the Continental Army during the War for Independence. They see Lincoln as the more active of the two, associating him with the Civil War and the emancipation of slaves. As Student J., a very articulate third-grader, noted in his interview:

Interviewer: OK, who was Washington?

Student J.: The first president.

Interviewer: Who was Lincoln?

Student J: The second president, no, not second, yeah, I think he might have been the second president. Well, at least Abraham Lincoln was a lot more important.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Student J..: Well, George Washington, he didn't do anything really to help anyone. Lincoln did two things.

Interviewer: What?

Student J.: He, well actually three things, stopped slavery, let blacks be free, you know, he mostly started it, well actually four things. He gave, another one is he kept the United States from being two countries because of you know slavery on one side and uh, you know [gave] that black

guy the idea to let blacks have their rights. So he did four things."

Headdress and clothing are also important components of the students' images of Washington and Lincoln. The following excerpt from student KK illustrates the point.

Interviewer: What did he [George Washington] do?

Student L:: He was a President, and he chopped down a cherry tree.

Interviewer: What did he look like?

Student L: He looked funny.

Interviewer: Funny how?

Student L.: He had a little braid in back of his hair with his hair all curled up like that [she makes a curling motion] in the front.

Interviewer: How about his clothes?

Student L.: He wore a suit. . . .

Interviewer: OK.

Student L.: He wore pretty shoes.

Interviewer: How were the shoes pretty?

Student L.: They looked like slippers. . . .

Interviewer: Who else do you know about who lived a long time ago?

Student L: Other presidents.

Interviewer: Tell me about other presidents.

Student L.: I only know about the one with the big hat.

Interviewer: Who was he, the one with the big hat?

Student L.: Abraham Lincoln.

Unusual hair treatments, hats, suits and shoes obviously make a deep impression on young people's historical imagination.

While the students' think of the past in terms of discrete topics, primarily individuals and groups of people, at least some of the topics are connected. The Indians provide a major element of coherence to the childrens' view of the past. They see, on one hand, a nexus between American Indians and "cowboys." They also link the Indians to Columbus and the Pilgrims. However, the Indian connection also presents a major conceptual problem, as the same Indians appear in quite different places and time periods. The same generic Indians who fought the soldiers in *Dances with Wolves* also were on hand to greet Columbus when he stepped ashore and when the Pilgrims celebrated the first Thanksgiving.

Children's Understanding of Chronological Order

Despite the problem they have differentiating between American Indians, the students do have a rudimentary historical chronology in mind. They know that the people and groups have a temporal order, with some coming before others. In the beginning were the dinosaurs and cavemen, with some confusion as to whether they were contemporaneous or appeared sequentially. Then came the American Indians, followed by Columbus and the Pilgrims. However, some students had difficulty figuring out the chronological relationship between the latter two. However, most of the students did manage to work through the problem, noting that Columbus discovered the Indians, but not the Pilgrims, which meant that Columbus must fit chronologically between the Indians and the Pilgrims. Washington and Lincoln come later on. Washington was first, as he was the first President, which keeps that sequence in proper order.

While some students have to struggle to put the above chronology in order, none of them had difficulty differentiating between past and present. They have a very strong sense of pastness. That is, they see the past as a very different place from the present. That difference is perceived in many ways: in hair styles, clothing styles, and the kinds of dwellings people lived in. But above all else, the past is different from the present in terms of technology. The major division in their minds between past and present is a technological divide.

Children's Understanding of Historical Time

Previous researchers have discovered that children begin to develop an understanding of concepts of historical time by age five (Jahoda, 1963; Thornton & Vukelich, 1988). Until then, concepts of time, whether conventional (clock and calendar) or historical time, have little influence on children's thought (Friedman, 1978). By ages 8 or 9, children are able to use such terms as "a long time ago" and can place historical dates in correct sequences. Children in British studies could understand by age 9 that Robin Hood lived before their mother's or grandmother's time (Bradley, 1947; but see Applebee, 1978). By age 10 to 12, American students can use more refined labels for historical periods, such as "the Civil War era" (Levstik & Papas, 1987).

The students interviewed for this project had some difficulty placing American Indians in historical time. Thirteen students were asked whether the Indians (those who lived in teepees, not modern-day Indians) lived when their mother was a child. All agreed that it was before then. When asked if their grandmother was a child at that time, five said yes. Another six placed the Indians before their grandmother's time, including one student who responded that Indians lived well before his great-

grandmother was a child. Two students were uncertain. In other words, nearly half the students who answered the question placed the Indians in their grandmother's time, which is clearly too late for teepee-dwelling Indians.

The Sources of Children's Historical Knowledge

Where did the children learn the history that they know? Their responses indicate that they have a variety of sources of information available to them. They learn history by going to school, watching television, reading books, going to museums, and by simply being alive. They absorb a good deal of historical information indirectly from the culture around them. Modern-day American society is sometimes criticized for being ahistorical, but nothing could be farther from the truth. The mass media brings a continuous stream of historical images into the American home. Television programming and the renting of video tapes make up only part of it. Daily newspapers and news magazines use historical scenes and images to sell a wide variety of products. In the western states, even banks and savings and loan companies feature stage coaches, cowboys, and other historical symbols in their advertisements. As one student said, children learn history naturally:

Interviewer: Besides *Dances With Wolves* how else have you found out about Indians?

Student J.: Well, I don't know. I guess it just comes in naturally, you know, you see a few things about it, you know, you kind of know what they wear, what they lived in, you know, what they did, and where they lived looked like.

Interviewer: What do you mean when you say you just learned about it naturally?

Student J.: Well, you just kind of find out about it, you don't want to, its not like you really don't want to, but not like, you know, just happen to see these things, and, you know, know.

In so far as the history of American Indians is concerned, the source most frequently mentioned by the students was television, especially movies they had watched. Many of them had watched the video tape of *Dances With Wolves*, usually in the company of their parents. Another student mentioned watching *Little Big Man*. Others said they had watched movies about Indians on television, but could not remember the titles of the films. Books were the next most common source of information about Indians. In several instances, these were books that had been read to them in school by a teacher or at home by a grandparent. In other instances, they were children's books that they either read or used as picture books on their own.

Finally, the students interviewed had learned a good deal of history in school. Because history is not offered as a regular part of instruction until the fourth grade (state history), one should not assume that students are not exposed to history in school until then. In fact, children receive instruction in history in one guise or another every year from Kindergarten on. Kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade teachers were mentioned during the interviews as sources of information about Indians. History is also taught in the primary grades through art projects on Columbus in October and the Pilgrims in November, as well as through the observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday in January and the

birthdays of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in February. For many students, this round of national holiday-history begins in pre-school.

Distinguishing Between History and the Past

The ability to distinguish between history and the past is critical to historical understanding. The past is everything that ever happened; history is what we make of the past. History is a construct, a reconstruction based on the evidence at hand. It is the awareness of that distinction that empowers children to become historians on their own, to take the past into their own hands, to do historical reconstruction for themselves. Levstik (1986) reports that fourth-grade students are capable of making this distinction, with even second-grade students doing so to some extent.

We probed into their understanding of the term history in different ways. Questions about what history is were included in the initial student interviews. The question "What is History?" was included in the list to which they responded in their student logs. They were asked during the drawing conferences whether the drawing was historical, with a follow-up question about what made it historical? The personal narrative interviews also included a question about whether those pieces were historical and what would have made them historical?

The most straight-forward responses were the answers they wrote in their log entries to the question "What is history?"
Twenty-four students were present in class that day to make log entries. Only six students related the term to the past, usually making the two synonymous. The following are the responses of individual students:

"History means something that happened long ago."

"History is someone who is a star that is old."

"It means you are going to be nothing."

"Lrne abote dinusur's"

"People talk about it thoow lot of years."

"It means thing that happed in the pats."

Eight students associated the term in some way with the school curriculum, most of them equating history with science.

"I think it means like when somebody is having a history test."

"I think it means drawing."

"It means writing."

"History is seine [science]."

"Seince"

"I don't know. I think it means learning siense."

"It means siense."

"I think it means art scince."

Nine students either left the line blank or simply said "I do not know, although one of these students had defined the term in the initial interview two weeks earlier.

In brief, only one-fourth of the students associated the term history with the past. No student made the distinction between the two in their responses to this question. That is, none suggested that history is something that we do or say about the past. This does not mean that this critically important dimension of historical understanding is beyond the grasp of eight-year olds. It may only mean that the question did not probe deeply enough into how those students who could define the word history understood the term.

The Levstik (1986) study of children's understanding of the notion of history focused the distinctions students made between past events. They considered some events and people to be part of history, some not. In other words, Levstik concluded, they had mini-theories about historical significance. At least one of the students at Washington School also made such a distinction.

Interviewer: What makes a thing history then? You just mentioned some pretty serious things.

Student J.: Well really serious things, important things that changed their future. And so they want to learn about that, so, you know, they want to learn about it, find out more things about it, if they can.

Interviewer: Changed whose future?

Student J: You know, like things that happen today might change what will happen tomorrow, you know, someone might get into a sweat and tomorrow they won't.

Interviewer: Is that history?

Student J.: No, its kind of an example.

Interviewer: What about mothers and fathers going off to work in the morning and coming back at night? Is that history? Would that be history in the future?

Student J.: Well if they went to work and Michael Jackson stopped by and asked them if he could use the bathroom, that would be history."

Interviewer: It has to have a Michael Jackson in it does it?

Student J.: No.

Intervierwer: What makes it history then?

Student J.: It makes it history because it is something exciting that doesn't happen every day.

Interviewer: O.K. Unusual things?

Student J.: Yeah, like things you know that don't have to be usual, but . . . was Desert Storm unusual?

Interviewer: Well, was it?

Student J.: No, something thats happening that was really the main focus in something that everyone was thinking about at that time.

Interviewer: OK, if its a big deal and involves a lot of people, then its. . . ?

Student J.: It doesn't have to involve a lot of people but if its a really big deal, its history.

Interviewer: OK, I think I understand what you mean by that.

Student J.: You know if was history if, you know, my Mom went to work, there would be two million, billion, thousand, million, quadruple, a million, trillion, million things of history happening in just one day. Just think, the Guinnes Book of World Records would be stacked with pages up to the moon.

In other words, to Ian all things that happened in the past are not of equal importance.

Empathetic Identification

In establishing a baseline from which to measure the students' development of historical understanding, we also wanted to know whether they could identify empathetically with people who had lived in another

time. Knowing how people who lived in the past saw, thought about, and felt about the things around them is surely critical to historical understanding. It is also one of the most challenging kinds of historical thinking, difficult enough even for adults. While we did not expect to find fully developed historical empathy in third-grade students, we did want to know to what extent eight- and nine-year-olds were willing and able to engage in this kind of thinking. Were there limitations in terms of their level of cognitive development? Was there any indication that such understanding could be developed by purposeful teaching? To explore these areas of concern, the students were asked several questions, including the following.

Do you think the Indians liked to live the way they did? In asking this question, we were interested in seeing whether the students were at least willing to entertain the idea that other people might find a way of life much different from theirs satisfactory. Two-thirds of the students responded that Indians either liked or probably liked the way they lived, which suggests that they are receptive to the idea that ways of living in the past could make sense to those who lived then. That does not mean that they would like to have lived then. that mean that they, too, would like to have lived then? Half the students said that they would have liked to. But that does not mean that they would like to change places with people of other times, at least with the American Indians.

Would you like to have lived then? Only one-third gave an affirmative answer to this question. The majority of these students would like to have lived then because they could ride horses. Others found the idea of living in teepees attractive. Two students thought it would be nice to go hunting as the Indians did. They were unaware that the native

Americans in closest geographical proximity to them did not ride horses or live in teepees and did not live entirely by hunting. A better informed group of students very likely would have qualified their affirmative responses. Most of those who said no could not imagine living without the benefits of CD players, eye glasses, bicycles, warm houses, and other aspects of modern technology.

Would Indians enjoy living now? In every instance, the students responded yes to this question, although two of the answers were somewhat qualified. They were quite consistent in their explanations: the native Americans would appreciate the benefits of modern technology. "They would enjoy our houses, clothes, and everything," one student said. Another responded, "Yes, wouldn't have to ride horses all the time and could live in houses instead of their small teepees." Even one of the students who qualified her answer with a "probably," acknowledged the attraction of present-day technology. "Probably," she responded. "There would be more things now, especially, houses, clothes, cars, and school." The other student with a qualified response simply said, "They'd like it now and liked it before."

The responses suggest that the students were in varying degrees willing to entertain the idea that native Americans in the past may have lived satisfying lives. But most of the students could not imagine themselves living in such a time. Those who thought they might liked living then had very limited reasons for thinking so: some of the things American Indians did would be fun to do. They have no doubt that their own times are preferable, and that even the native Americans would enjoy living today. There was a strong suggestion that native Americans would find present-day American culture preferable to their own.

While many of the students could acknowledge that native Americans might have found their lives satisfactory, that does not necessarily qualify as historical empathy. They responded to the second question, which asked if they would like to have lived then, with all of their present-day values, preferences, and tastes intact. It was as if they had been asked if they could imagine living without Nintendo, bicycles and CD players. A few could, but that is only the first step toward historical empathy. At least one other step is essential. That is to wrap oneself in the values and perspectives of those who lived then. To ask students to do that is to ask them to imagine living without ever having known about Nintendo. They must try to empty their minds of as much of their present-day awareness as possible, replacing it with an awareness appropriate to the past. That kind of awareness was consistently lacking in the students' responses.

Are there developmental obstacles that might prevent eight- and nine-year-olds for thinking in such terms? Perhaps. Two of the students, in both cases articulate girls, had difficulty imagining themselves living as children in the past. They could only project themselves backward as adults. In one instance, that was part of the attraction of thinking about living in the past--"because you could be more bigger; like then you'd be a grandma." However, this inability to project oneself backward without aging occurred only in two instances. Whether it is a characteristic of younger children that most of the research cohort had outgrown or an idiosyncrasy that two students happened to have shared is unclear.

Are third-graders capable of empathetic identification with people who lived at another time? That remains to be seen. There may be developmental constraints involved, as the above instances suggest. But

such constraints remain largely obscured at the moment by the students' general lack of historical knowledge. It is surely impossible for them to empathize with American Indians when their knowledge of them consists largely of stereotypes that bear little correspondence to reality. To put oneself in someone else's shoes, one must know a good deal about those shoes.

Without a well-developed knowledge base, the students' predisposition to understand the past subjectively is not likely to bear fruit. Empathetic identification implies that students have a fund of knowledge to provide the basis for identification. Historical empathy does involve affective as well as cognitive functions, but it is not the result of an intuitive leap from ignorance to understanding.

III. CONCLUSION

The data collected during the initial phase of research by the Writing to Learn History Project supports a number of conclusions. In the first place, the findings demonstrate that the students in the research cohort already have a store of information and mental images about American Indians and other historical topics. Much of that information is the product of historical stereotypes perpetuated by the mass media, the schools, and other sources. That means that most of the students will not be able to develop further historical understanding about Indians simply by extending the knowledge they already have. The course of their learning will not be straight-line progression, as much of what they know about American Indians is not applicable to those native Americans who lived in California. The Indians they know about are the wrong Indians, so to speak.

For these students, developing historical understanding will probably involve a dialectical process. The new knowledge that they gain will create tensions with the old knowledge that they have. They are unlikely to reject the older knowledge, as it is too well supported by visual and written evidence to be discarded lightly. Presumably the students will begin to differentiate between groups of Indians. The project needs to monitor their progress in differentiating between the Indians they first knew about and the Indians they are learning about now. Perhaps this also affords a larger insight into historical learning. It suggests that developing historical understanding is not just a matter of accumulating knowledge, but of gaining knowledge that creates dissonance, which in turn is resolved by differentiating between historical times, places, and people.

Secondly, visual images loom large over these students' landscape of historical knowledge. The nature and function of this historical imagery needs to be probed as deeply as possible as the research proceeds. Are these simply isolated fragments of memory--a Plains Indian's headdress, Washington's slippers, Lincoln's hat? Or are these symbolic images, mental pictures that represent and evoke a larger universe of historical information. That is, are the images bits of historical trivia or they essential hooks upon which children hang historical knowledge? At the moment, the question remains unanswered.

This prompts still another question. Historical thinking involves synthesis or the capacity to see things whole. Do some images play a more integrative role in children's historical understanding than others? The image of the Plains Indian played such an integrative role for many of the students. It served as a connector linking cultural groups and historical

events together. Are there other images as well that serve children as connecting links? Again, the question cannot yet be answered.

Finally, the findings suggest that the development of historical empathy may be linked closely to gains in knowledge acquisition. Whether third-grade students can identify with people who lived in the past under conditions much different from those of today may depend upon several factors. There may be developmental contsraints that prevent or limit such imaginative leaps into other circumstances and other times. But any such identification depends also upon the students knowing what life was actually like during the time period concerned. While emphathetic identification has an affective element, it must also have a basis in knowledge.

CHAPTER 3

AFTER THE DINOSAURS: THE CHRONOLOGICAL THINKING OF THIRD- AND FOURTH-GRADE STUDENTS

The recent movement for curriculum reform in the United States has helped focus attention on historical learning in the elementary grades. Several state history-social science frameworks and national commission reports have called for more history instruction in the elementary grades and for introducing history materials in lower grades than before. The state of Florida now recommends the teaching of Medieval history in Grade 3, which is three or four years earlier than this historical period has traditionally been introduced. The reform proposals raise questions about the ability of children in the elementary grades to benefit from history instruction. Are the new frameworks introducing history at an appropriate age? More critically, do developmental factors, such as children's understanding of historical time, place age constraints on historical learning?

There is a small, but important, body of literature about the development of children's understanding of historical time. Most of the early work was done by British and American psychologists who were only incidentally concerned about historical time. They were primarily interested in the development of children's notions of physical and conventional or clock time, although some of their tests included items or subsets related to historical time (Oakden and Sturt, 1922; Ames, 1946; Bradley, 1947; Springer, 1952; Jahoda, 1962). Only in recent years have researchers focused their attention primarily on the development of children's sense of historical time. This research, for the most part, is the

work of educators rather than psychologists (Poster, 1973; Levstik and Pappas, 1987; Thronton and Vukelich, 1988).

The early research by psychologists tended to emphasize the developmental constraints on children's understanding of historical time. It indicted that children do not begin to understand historical time until about age five. Before then, time and space are said to be confounded in a child's mind, with the past being a mixture of isolated fact and fancy grouped under the single category of "yesterday." After that age, Jahoda (1962) notes in his review of this literature, children gradually begin to order historical time into earlier and later events and acquire the ability to use dates. By age 9, British children could understand that Robin Hood lived before their grandmother's time and by age 10-11 could arrange a series of dates in correct order. However, only after age 11 could children differentiate between various historical periods. Some researchers placed the full understanding of chronology even later, with at least one study suggesting "that full understanding of time words and dates is not reached until sixteen" (p.97).

The difficulty that young children had understanding historical time may have reflected in part the criteria the psychologists used to measure it. Much of this early research focused on children's ability to use dates and time terminology correctly. Oakden and Sturt (1922) set out to trace, among other abilities, "the growth of that sense of time which gives us the power to think in dates" (p. 310). Was the year 58 B.C. three years after or before the year 55 B.C.? Was Robin Hood, "who lived in 1187," alive when the child's mother or grandmother was alive or before then? The researchers designed the question so that the most important clue was the date assigned to Robin Hood. Bradley (1947), as well as Oakden and Sturt,

used tests in which children had to arrange a series of three dates in chronological order. Young children found questions involving dates difficult.

Some of the early research also confounded historical time with other kinds of understandings. Both Oakden and Sturt (1922) and Bradley (1947) based their conclusions partly on children's ability to detect historical absurdities. Oakden and Sturt's test included the following passages, in which the italicized words represented absurdities that the children were supposed to identify.

> In 55 B.C. Julius Caesar arrived with his troops at Dover. . . . The next day, Wednesday, the *30th February*, the Romans caught a British prisoner. . . . At dawn [Caesar] offered a sacrifice. Taking off his *top-hat* he stood before the Altar and prayed 'O, *Lord Jesus*, may this day, *Friday*, by others regarded as unlucky, prove fortunate top us.' The Romans won a great victory due to their superiority in *gun fire*. The British chieftain was taken prison and shown in Caesar's triumphal procession three years later, *58 B. C.*. His grandson is *still living* in a remote corner of Scotland. (p. 319.)

To respond correctly, students needed historical knowledge, including knowledge about the history of Christianity, an understanding of the B.C.-A.D. dating system, and calendar knowledge, as well as an understanding of historical time. Young children were less likely to have acquired the necessary understandings than their older counterparts.

The more recent research by educators tends to be less concerned about dates and time systems and more interested in how children think historically. It focuses on children's understanding of broad time

categories, an avenue of inquiry first explored by Friedman (1943-1944). He devised a test that asked children to place a set of events in one of the following categories: "a long time ago," "a short time ago," "a short time to come," and "a long time to come." Children in grades 4 to 6 (about ages 9 to 11) consistently placed George Washington, the Pilgrims, and Bible times in the category "a long time ago." Levstik and Pappas (1987) found that students in grade 2 were able to use such broad time categories as "long ago" and "before a long time ago," with students in grades 4 and 6 able to make still finer distinctions. "Sixth graders used 'the past' and 'long ago' as categorical headings and then provided specific instances such as "the time of empires like the Incas or the American Revolution"(p. 8). Vukelich and Thornton (1990) suggest that there is a developmental progression in which children 6-to 8-years old commonly use general time references ("long ago" and "way back when"), 9- to 11-year olds identify time periods ("the era of the industrial revolution"), and 12-14-year olds more precise terms ("decade, century") (p. 23).

The constraints placed on historical learning by developmental factors vary depending upon how one defines and measures children's understanding of historical time. Psychologists have tended to define it in terms of an understanding of dates and formal time systems. Educational researchers have focused on children's understanding of concepts of historical time. Not surprisingly, they have reached quite different conclusions about developmental constraints. The implications for history instruction of the psychologists's research were summed up in Bradley's conclusion that "the capacity to understand the conventional time-scheme and to use particular time-words correctly is later in developing than is usually believed, and this is of major significance, particularly in relation

to the teaching of history" (p. 77). The more recent findings that children can understand general time concepts at an early age obviously have more optimistic implications for historical learning in the lower grades. Are there still other dimensions of children's understanding of historical time that have not yet been considered that also have developmental implications? What about children's understanding of chronology?

Children's grasp of chronology is surely one aspect of their understanding of historical time that deserves consideration. When we think about history, Jahoda (1962) noted, "we associate it with dates and chronological sequence." But, he hastened to add, the two are not synonymous. Past events can be organized subjectively "without reference to the conventional time scale, but merely by the feeling that one particular event seems longer ago than another" (p. 93). Similarly, Oakden and Sturt (1922) concluded that children may have responded correctly to their Robin Hood question because his name "suggested a period remote from ordinary experience" and not because they "had any real understanding of a chronological [i.e., date-oriented] system" (p. 316). Our modern-day concern about the precise dating of events was not shared by the historians of ancient Greece. Neither Herodotus nor Thucidides conceived of historical chronology in terms of dates. "The chronology of Herodotus was imaginary, the sequence of events either legendary or invented by the author," Jahoda noted. ". . . Thucidides, although fond of quoting facts and figures, made practically no reference to dates " (Jahoda, p. 95). Events can be organized chronologically without reference to dates.

An understanding of chronology may be more basic than knowledge of dates and historical time concepts to historical thinking. Both Godin (1959) and Jahoda (1962) assumed that knowledge of appropriate time

terminology "precedes the child's grasp of time relationships" (Jahoda, p. 100). The reverse is more likely true. Historical understanding, as Giles and Neal have written, begins with "a sense of period and a grasp of chronological sequence, however imperfect and limited. Knowledge and a grasp of chronology are by no means synonymous with historical sense. . . . However, it has yet to be demonstrated that a historical sense can be acquired without them" (quoted in Lello 1980, p. 347). It is arguable that time concepts only make sense within the context of chronological thinking.

Considering the importance of chronology to a sense of historical time, it is surprising that so little research has been done on children's chronological thinking. One such study was conducted by McAulay (1961), who interviewed 165 second grade students to see if they could understand time relationships involving themselves, their family, their school and community, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, pioneers, and Indians. The children had a better understanding of historical chronology than they did of more immediate temporal relationships. McAulay concluded that "the social studies curriculum for the second grade underestimates the child's understanding of time. Perhaps the seven year old is able to comprehend large events of the past as they relate to the present; he is capable of associating historical persons one to the other, and retain some information concerning each event and person. The child would seem to have little comprehension of time as it relates to the immediate family and community." He thought it ironic that "it is about the family and community the second grade social studies curriculum revolves" (p. 312).

Using a different approach, West (1978) investigated children's ideas of chronological sequence with picture cards. Children were asked to arrange 10 picture cards in chronological order. Among the items were pictures of dinosaurs, cavemen, Tutankhamen, Roman Legionaires, a medieval castle, Guy Fawkes, and a stage coach. An average of 30 percent of the 7-year olds were able to do this correctly. At age 8, after a year of history instruction, 50 percent of the students could make the correct arrangement. In both studies, the children demonstrated a grasp of chronological relationships without reference to dates and without using time concepts.

METHOD OF THIS STUDY

The research reported in this chapter represents a further exploration of children's understanding of chronology. The research was conducted in a third-grade classroom and a fourth-grade classroom in schools located in two large cities in the San Francisco Bay area. The third-grade classroom was in a school in a working-class neighborhood, with a racially and ethnically heterogeneous student population. The fourth-grade school was located in a middle-class neighborhood with a predominantly white population. In each classroom, a representative cross-section of the students was selected as the research subjects. Each classroom had approximately thirty students. Thirteen students were selected in the third-grade classroom; sixteen in the fourth-grade class.

The data reported here were collected in a series of student interviews. The initial interviews in the third-grade classroom were conducted early in October for the purpose of collecting baseline data. These were followed later that month by interviews that focused specifically on the students' historical knowledge. A final interview was

conducted in April. The data for the fourth-grade students was collected during interviews conducted the following September. During this time, the project also collected data in the form of student writings, although that data is not relevant to this report.

An investigation of the students' grasp of chronology was not part of the original research design. The project was primarily concerned about how writing activities might be used to foster historical thinking and understanding. The initial findings about the students' sense of chronological order came almost by accident during interviews early in the Fall that were designed to establish baseline data. Data about chronological thinking was not collected systematically until the second year of the project, with fourth-grade students as the research subjects.

THIRD-GRADE STUDENT INTERVIEWS

The baseline interviews for the third-grade students included questions designed to assess their historical understanding and knowledge of California Indians, which was the project's content focus that year. The concluding question was "what other things do you know about that happened in the past?" As the students had not yet received any formal instruction in history, this researcher assumed that they knew very little about the past. Surprised by their responses, he allocated additional time during these and subsequent interviews to map the third-grade students' landscape of historical knowledge. For fear of imposing upon them knowledge not of their own creation, he did not initially ask questions that included names or events. However, midway through baseline interviews, a checklist had taken shape based on student-generated words. Subsequently, the first students were re-interviewed to make sure that all had been asked about all the items on the list. Still other items were

added to the checklist for the final interview the following Spring to probe for knowledge of topics that had not emerged spontaneously.

By the time they had reached the third grade, the students had accumulated a small but worthwhile stock of historical knowledge. All thirteen students knew about Columbus, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln. Nearly all could identify Pilgrims and cowboys, and knew that white Americans had enslaved African Americans. Several could identify Davy Crocket. Two or more students could identify the Vikings, the Gold Rush, the American Revolution, and the United States Constitution. When questioned about how they had acquired this information, the students mentioned several sources. They knew about Columbus, the Pilgrims, and the two Presidents through exposure to "holiday history" during holiday observances during their K-3 school years. Their knowledge of Indians came from being exposed to American popular culture. For example, several of the students had recently watched *Dancing With Wolves*, a movie about Plains Indians that had just been released as a home video. Others had been introduced to various historical topics by stories read to them by their parents and grandparents or through family outings to museums and historical sites.

During the course of the interviews, some of the students were asked questions about chronological sequence. These questions emerged spontaneously, as it was not assumed in the beginning that third-grade students had a grasp of chronology. During a discussion about Indians and dinosaurs, James had explained that Indians were not alive during dinosaur times because the cave men came between the two.

I think they [the dinosaurs] died, and then the cave men came, because they were not like the Indians because they did not know how to make boats. . . ."

"Do you think the cavemen lived around dinosaur times?

I asked.

"Uhh. . . no because. . . dinosaurs ain't like humans because they have teeth, but not that sharp of teeth. . . .

"How about after the cave men?"

"I think after the cave men came Indians. . . . .

"After the cavemen came the Indians. What happened next? Anybody come after the Indians?" I asked.

"Probably we did. Because if they were so smart, we came and. . . until things get smarter and smarter until we have computers to help us these days, and jobs, ah, wood cabinets, and stuff."

"Tell me about the people who came after the Indians."

"The dinosaurs came and then the Indians [forgetting about the cave men]. . . . After the Indians had died, God made more of us, just put 1,000 on the earth. . . ."

While it was not surprising that James knew about dinosaurs, cavemen and Indians, his arranging them in chronological order had not been anticipated.

Before the interviews were completed in the Spring, three other students had touched upon chronology. Alan had replied to one of my questions that Indians had lived a thousand years ago or more, "because they're related to the cave men and stone age stuff." "Which came first?" he was asked.

"Stone age, and then Indians."

"Where were the knights and castles, then?" He had mentioned earlier in the interview that he had read a book about Medieval times.

"They were after the Indians."

This line of questioning was resumed later in the interview.

"You mentioned that Stone Age people lived before the Indians."

"Yeah."

"And knights and castles came after them. Can you think of any other people who lived in the past?"

"Uh. . . sure, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Hawaiians. I forget what they called the kind of Indians they had."

"Where do Lincoln and Washington fit into all this, before the Indians or after the Indians?"

"After, after the cave men, after the knights and stuff, way after that. . . ."

Alan's chronology was not entirely accurate. The Indians, of course, spanned all of these time periods, living in North America before, during, and after the heyday of European knights and castles. Nevertheless, Alan's scheme was plausible, as the Indians he had in mind were the California Indians of the pre-Spanish contact period that he was then learning about. He did place Washington and Lincoln in a more recent period than knights and the pre-contact California Indians, and placed the latter after the time of the cave men.

It also became apparent from these initial interviews that chronological placement can be problematic for third graders. Greta had difficulty trying to decide whether Columbus or the Pilgrims came first. We had talked about the Pilgrims earlier in the interview, and about their

sailing to North America in a boat. Then she told me that Columbus had also sailed in a boat and had discovered the Indians.

"Did Columbus come before the Pilgrims or after the Pilgrims?" I had asked.

"He came after," she replied.

"He came after the Indians?" I asked, uncertain that she had understood the question, as we had just been talking about Columbus discovering the Indians.

"Yeah."

Having reintroduced the Pilgrims, I was afraid that I had confused her.

"Let's see," I said. "Let's try to get things set up here." I marked off spaces on the table top with my fingers, making a kind of timeline.

"There were the Indians, right?" I said, pointing to one end of the imaginary timeline.

"And then there were the Pilgrims?" I pointed to a second place along the line.

"Yeah."

Now where would you put Columbus?"

"Right there." She pointed to a place beyond where I had located the Pilgrims, indicating that she really had thought that the Columbus came after the Pilgrims.

"So Columbus is sometime after the Pilgrims?"

"Yeah."

"Well, did Columbus discover the Pilgrims?

"Make that backwards."

"Make what backwards?"

"That Columbus came and then the Pilgrims came."

"The Pilgrims came after Columbus?"

"Yeah."

"Oh, I see. . . . Who did Columbus see when he arrived?"

"He saw the Indians."

"Did he see the Pilgrims?"

"No."

Placing Columbus and the Pilgrims in chronological order had posed a problem for Greta. However, with some assistance, she was able to work her way through it. She finally concluded that Columbus had to have preceded the Pilgrims. Otherwise he would have discovered the Pilgrims as well as the Indians, and that seemed illogical to her.

Christine, another third-grade student, shared Greta's problem with the Columbus-Pilgrim relationship. During the course of the interview, she mentioned the Pilgrims.

"Who were the Pilgrims?" I asked.

"Pilgrims were things that Christopher Columbus found when he was, he found out that, he made them out to be Pilgrims. He came on this boat, and he came to their land. They were having a party, and, uhh, then they had, uhh, and he decided to name them Pilgrims. . . ."

I asked her to tell me more about Columbus, and she replied that he had sailed from his country and had discovered the Indians.

"He found the Indians, did he? Did he call them the Indians?"

"Native Americans."

"He also called the Pilgrims the Pilgrims?"

"No, naw, I don't know, I don't know."

"All right, but you are pretty sure he found the Indians?"

"Yeah. . . ."

"Who came first and who came next?"

"The Indians were first, then came the Pilgrims."

"And where does Columbus fit in?"

"Oh, first."

"You just said the Indians were first."

"No, Christopher Columbus, then the Indians, then the Pilgrims."

This line of questioning ended here with Christine hopelessly confused. Unlike Greta, she was not able to reason her way through the problem.

FOURTH GRADE STUDENT INTERVIEWS

In September, 1992, the research was resumed in a fourth-grade classroom in another school. This time, I took care to include questions about historical background knowledge and chronology in the baseline interview. The sixteen students on which I was gathering data were asked if they could identify the following names and terms: Abraham Lincoln, Christopher Columbus, Pilgrims, George Washington, Cavemen, Vikings, Knights and Castles, Gold Rush, and the Civil War. As I was also interested in their understanding of chronology, I only included names or terms that I assumed most fourth-grade students would know. To count as a correct identification, the students had to provide some correct historical information about the item. Merely recognizing the name as one they had heard before did not count. Table A indicates the responses.

Next, the students were asked to place the items in eight pairs of words in the correct chronological order. An item was skipped if the

student had failed to identify one or the other of the terms. The gold rush and Spanish explorers were included, as California history was the focus of instruction that year. See Table B for the students' responses.

RESULTS

Most of the fourth-grade students succeeded in placing most of the items within each pair in the correct chronological order. Placing Lincoln and Washington in order proved to be the most difficult task. Nearly three-quarters of the students solved the Columbus-Pilgrim problem, which had created difficulties for some of the third-grade students. Even some of the fourth-grade students had to struggle with the problem.

"It's a hard question," said Mark, "I'm not really sure about this one because if the Pilgrims came first, Columbus would have saw them. I don't know."

Nate narrowed the alternatives to either "at the same time" or "after" by logical deduction.

"Did the Pilgrims come before Columbus?"

"I don't think so," he said, after a long pause.

"Columbus came before the Pilgrims?"

"I think."

"What would make you think that's the order?"

"Well, I think that the Pilgrims were Englishmen, but Europeans, so either they came over on Columbus's boat or they came a bit later."

Alan decided that they all came together, calling Columbus a Pilgrim. Danny, very articulate, found it confusing as well. Although he knew that "Columbus discovered America in 1492," he thought that the Pilgrims were "a little bit first."

CHRONOLOGICAL REASONING

How the students determined chronological order became clearer as the interviews proceeded. In the first place, they seldom used dates. Danny and Shawn, both of whom knew that Columbus discovered American in 1492, were the exceptions. Shawn also added an approximate date for the Pilgrims. Columbus came before the Pilgrims, he said, because "I think the Pilgrims came in 1600 or something like that, and Columbus discovered America in 1492." None of the other fourteen fourth-grade students mentioned or compared dates. During the interviews, students sometimes used such expressions as "long ago" or "a long time ago," but not in their explanations of chronological order.

In sorting things out chronologically, the students relied heavily on visual cues. Their historical landscape is furnished with mental pictures of people and things. Children are visual learners, as all teachers know. They also retrieve historical information from memory visually. The extent to which the students relied upon visual imagery in their historical thinking was evident in the interviews with third-grade students. When I asked Katie if she knew about anyone who lived in the past besides Indians, she mentioned George Washington:

"What did he do?" I asked.

"He was a President, and he chopped down a cherry tree."

"What did he look like?"

"Kind of funny," she replied.

"Funny how?"

"He had a little braid in back of his hair with his hair all curled up like that in front," she said, making a curling motion with her fingers in her hair.

"How about his clothes?"

"He wore a suit. . . ."

"O.K."

"He wore pretty shoes."

"How were the shoes pretty?"

"They looked like slippers. . . ."

"Who else do you know about who lived a long time ago?

"Other Presidents."

"Tell me about other Presidents."

"I only know about the one with the big hat," she replied.

"Who was he, the one with the big hat?"

"Abraham Lincoln."

Clothing, headdress, and hair styles figured largely in the students' historical images. They associated Indians with feathered headdresses, Vikings with horned helmets, and Abraham Lincoln with his stovepipe hat. The clothing styles of historical periods had a dual function. In the first place, they were memorable. Washington's distinctive clothing helped Katie remember him. However, clothing styles also give the students important chronological cues. Dolores, a fourth-grade student, placed George Washington after the Pilgrims because his clothing looked less ancient.

"Well, I look at the clothes that George Washington wore and I look at the clothes the Pilgrims wore, and I see a big difference."

"And which one looks like its the older?" I asked.

"The Pilgrims. And then if you combine [compare] it with us and then the Pilgrims, they would look much older, and compare us with George Washington and he would look older."

The technology of a period was another visual indicator of historical time. In placing people chronologically, the students frequently mentioned weapons and tools. The boys, especially, focused on weapons:

"The cave men were after the dinosaurs, they used a lot of rocks, and they lived in these caves, and places that they lived, and they tried to find food like the Indians, and they made weapons," Danny said.

They knew that the weapons of the cavemen were wooden clubs and rocks, which they considered a more primitive technology than the bows and arrows of the Indians. Their timeline for weapons technology extended from wooden clubs to bows and arrows to swords and shields to cannon and guns. Mark placed knights and castles before George Washington's time based on the weapons that he associated with each period:

> "The knights and castles were probably before Washington because Washington was around when there were big wars with guns and big cannons, but knights were working with swords and shields."

Guns also figured prominently in the students' images of the cowboy, with branding irons, lariats, and other tools of the trade being conspicuously missing.

The quantity of weapons, tools, and other material goods that people had was also important to the students in reckoning historical time. James placed the Indians after the cave men "because they [cave men] didn't have much stuff. And now the Indians have a little bit more. They have knives, and they know how to make Indian dolls and stuff. [A doll was one of the artifacts we had used in the classroom.] And they know how to

make arrows, spears, and weapons." Mark noted that both the Pilgrims and the Americans of George Washington's time had guns, but the Pilgrims had fewer of them:

I think Washington came after [the Pilgrims] because. . . Washington was around the wars, you know, the bigger, higher wars and back then [Pilgrim times] they didn't have enough guns and things."

The students' heavy reliance on visual imagery may help to explain the difficulty they had in deciding whether the Pilgrims or Columbus came first. Although they had vivid images of the Pilgrims, Columbus is a comparatively shadowy figure. No one mentioned what he wore or what he looked like. When asked what he thought about when he thought about Columbus, Danny replied:

"Umm, I kind of think of his boats and all the workers that helped him, and that he was just trying to find spices and landed on a place that he had never seen."

He did not mention clothing or the kind of weapons Columbus may have had. The students know that both Columbus and the Pilgrims came from Europe and both came on ships, but they have few visual cues that place them in different times and circumstances.

To say that the images are sharply etched does not necessarily mean that they have a high degree of historical accuracy. Some of the images were too stereotypical to provide an adequate foundation upon which to build future knowledge. To the third-grade students, all Indians were Plains Indians. In their minds, these mounted warriors of the Plains greeted Columbus, had turkey with the Pilgrims, and welcomed the Spanish to California. Their cowboys are perpetually chasing Indians, who,

in real life, they seldom if ever saw. Cowboys spent most of their time looking for strayed cattle, fixing fences and cutting hay, activities never mentioned by the students. History instruction must include image deconstruction and stereotype analysis.

The students also identified people by what they did. Columbus discovered America, the Pilgrims had a feast with the Indians, and Washington served as the United States's first President. However this knowledge had very little depth and the students were tentative about it. They felt much more secure when describing what such people looked like and what they wore. Dolores's answers to my questions about Lincoln were typical of such responses:

"Who was Abraham Lincoln?"

"Abraham Lincoln was a President. He was very tall and he was known to believe to have people, I think either in the North or the South, I don't remember, to not be slaves anymore."

"Anything happen otherwise during the time he was President that is important?"

"Umm, not that I can remember now. I probably do know, but I can't remember."

"You said that Lincoln was tall. What else comes to mind when you think about Lincoln? How do you see him?

"In black. In all the shows, in all the T.V. shows and all the pictures, he has on a black suit with a tall black hat. I suppose black was his favorite color."

Dolores felt much more confident discussing the color of Lincoln's clothes than his role in freeing the slaves.

The students also used common-sense reasoning to place items in chronological order. Simple logic helped the fourth-grade students consistently place Columbus after the Indians. If Columbus discovered America and encountered Indians, the Indians had to have been there first. As Mark put it:

> "Because if he had thought it was India and there were Indians there, obviously they were there before him. Because if he had gotten there first then he wouldn't have thought they were Indians, as there would have been no one there."

Only one fourth-grader placed Columbus before the Indians. This student used logical reasoning to reverse the correct order. Defining the term "discover" quite literally, Moses concluded that if Columbus discovered America, the Indians could not have been there first.

> "I am pretty sure he did because, I mean, he discovered America. [Otherwise], the Indians would have discovered it. . . . See, Columbus was the one who discovered America, then he went off to discover more, and the Indians think they got their first."

On the other hand, Nate pointed out that Columbus did not deserve credit for discovering America, as the Vikings had discovered America first, "apart from the Indians."

The historical associations that third- and fourth-grade students can make are narrowly circumscribed. They could have associated George Washington also with both Indians and kings had they known about his military career as an officer in the French and Indian War and the War for Independence. They failed to do so because their historical images are still thinly contextualized. They are also not yet connected together. The students did see historical time as continuous, but their timeline has many

empty spaces. Their chronological thinking is similar to that of Herodotus or Thucidides, "in whose thought the successive acts of men formed, in Focke's felicitous phrase, not a 'red line but 'red patches'" (Jahoda, 95). History instruction in the elementary grades should concentrate on adding richness of context and on linking the children's "red patches" together. Consequently, their chronologies are tightly compartmentalized.

Finally, the students relied heavily upon historical associations to place things in time. Elise placed the Pilgrims before George Washington by associating them with Indians. When asked which came first, Elise replied:

> "I think the Pilgrims date back farther than George Washington does because they were here at the time of the Indians."

Dorothy used much the same reasoning, when asked why she thought the Pilgrims came first.

> "I just think that since the Indians came first, and they [the Pilgrims] met with the Indians, I think [Washington] was a little bit later."

Elise associated Washington with the Presidency, which helped her place him after the knights and castles. The latter came before Washington "because the knights and castles didn't have Presidents; they had Kings." Presidents, to her, were not only more modern than Kings, but had replaced them. Donna had the same idea:

> "And then Modern Day kicked in and Presidents came in, so knights were first."

The students tended to associate prehistoric humans with caves; Pilgrims with Indians; knights and castles with kings and queens; and George

Washington with the Presidency. This helps them place these people in time, as the associated item or items can also serve as a time cue.

DISCUSSION

Research indicates that children's understanding of historical time consists of at least three kinds or levels of understanding. These include the ability to use dates and the terminology of historical time, the acquisition of general concepts of historical time, and a grasp of chronology. The ability to use dates and terms correctly seems to be acquired by about grade 5 or 6, when children are about age 10 or 11. The ability to use general time concepts comes somewhat earlier, at least by grade 4, possibly as early as grade 2. The data presented in this paper indicates that children have acquired a secure grasp of chronology by grade 4, and perhaps by grade 3. McAulay (1961) and West (1978) reported a similar grasp of chronology for students in grades 2 and 3.

The development of children's chronological thinking probably begins at a rather early age. It is a process of visual differentiation that does not require special skills. Children only need to notice that the people they see in historical pictures from different times did not dress the same and did not dress like people do today. Moreover, chronological relationships can be expressed in ordinary language, such as "before" and "after," terms that many 4-year olds can use correctly (Harner, 1982). This researcher asked his 4 1/2 year old daughter, Sarah, what she knew about George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. She knew what Washington and Lincoln looked like because her preschool teacher had posted their pictures in the classroom in observance of President's Day. She explained that both were Presidents and that one had "white, curly hair" [Washington's wig] and the other had dark hair and a beard [Lincoln]. Although she reversed

the names of the two Presidents, she knew that the dark-haired one wore a hat, while the curly-haired one did not. When asked if they lived at the same time or if one lived before the other was born, she replied that the curly-haired one came first. When asked why she thought this, she replied that the two men looked different. The fourth graders' grasp of chronology reported here represented a more sophisticated version of Sarah's perceptions, but the essential visual elements were present in her explanation.

The evidence suggests that fourth-grade students have a coherent sense of chronology that functions independently of dates and historical time concepts. Their grasp of chronology probably serves as a foundation upon which they construct other and more abstract ways to think about historical time. It is grounded in visual images, mental associations, and commonsense reasoning. The students' chronology also had a clearly marked beginning, as did the system that Poster (1973) encountered: "When a ten-year old boy was asked what he thought of when he heard the words time and past, he answered, 'The clock or cave men'." Poster concluded that cave men served as "an achronic bottom rung for their time ladder" (p. 92). The bottom rung in the chronological system of the fourth graders interviewed for this project was occupied by the dinosaurs.

"How about the cave men? Have you heard anything about cave men?" Albert was asked.

"Yeah, they were after the dinosaurs, a little after the dinosaurs."

His sense of duration was off, as the dinosaurs preceded the cave men by millions of years. But his chronology was correct. Human prehistory and history did begin "after the dinosaurs."

Developmental factors related to children's understanding of historical time probably do place constraints on historical learning. However, the research strongly suggests that the understanding of historical time has several dimensions and that the constraints operate upon each at different age levels. Are the new frameworks introducing history at an appropriate age? The best answer is probably a qualified yes. History instruction that helps children develop and refine their grasp of chronology can presumably be introduced early in the primary grades. Before the end of the primary years, many students will also able to use general time concepts. Working with dates and more specific time terminology should wait until later. Needless to say, language proficiency and children's levels of cultural background knowledge impose constraints no less important than developmental limitations. In any case, the critical factor is the design of the curriculum. To the extent that the new frameworks make appropriate curriculum choices possible in the primary and elementary grades, they will be a considerable asset to history education. To the extent that they license the teaching of curricula that is inappropriate, they will serve neither history nor the students well.

CHAPTER 4

THE PAST, THE SIGNIFICANT PAST, AND HISTORY: CHANGE IN CHILDREN'S CONCEPT OF HISTORY

The ability to distinguish between history and the past is central to historical thinking. Confusing the two is the source of much of the frustration that many young people experience when they encounter history as a school subject. They see history as an undifferentiated mass of names, facts, and dates, which are uniformly historically significant because they all happened in the past. Even those who realize that their textbooks do not contain all the know facts about the past find little solace in this fact. They know that there is more where that came form. That students have such a conception of history is understandable. The term is commonly used to denote everything that ever happened. To say that something or someone is "ancient history" means that it or they have been relegated to the past, in this case the dim past.

There is a second commonplace definition of history that does distinguish between what is "historic" and what is past. In this sense, the word history is used to denote something that is memorable or important. We say that the signing of the Declaration of Independence was an "historic" moment to distinguish it from other moments. This use of the term enables students to differentiate between events and people, some of which have greater significance than others. However, this definition, too, has limitations. It tends to objectify history. It implies that some events are inherently more important than others. When that happens--as it

often does--historical learning becomes a process of memorizing inherently important events.

The word history can also be understood in a third sense. History, according to this definition, is what people make of the past. It is a human construct. Facts are historically important because of the significance that we choose to give them. It is possible to make them quit being historically significant. This definition has the greatest potential for involving students actively and creatively in the history learning process. It shifts the focus of historical learning from attempting to memorize everything to deciding what is significant about the past and why it is significant. It makes it possible for students to become their own historians. It opens the door to metacognitive learning, in which history students become aware of the process in which they are involved when they are learning and doing history.

Asking whether writing activities can help elementary students distinguish between history and the past raises the question of developmental constraints on historical reasoning in children. Studies by Peel (1965, 1967), Hallam (1966, 1967, 1972), and others (Stokes, 1970; Lodwick, 1972) raised serious doubts about children's ability to engage in formal operational thinking with history materials before late adolescence. Children seemed to reach that stage at a later age in historical than in math and science reasoning. Hallam's subjects did not attain formal operational thinking in history until age 16, although Piaget's subjects had reached that level by age 11 to 12. Researchers in the Peel-Hallam tradition assumed that hypothetical and deductive thinking that was as necessary for historical thinking as it was for mathematical and scientific reasoning.

More recently, researchers have questioned whether Piagetian categories are appropriate for describing historical thinking. Kennedy (1983) found very weak relationships between measures of historical understanding and developmental level. Historical thinking, according to Booth (1980, 1984), is not primarily deductive thinking. Fischer (1984) has called it "adductive thinking," to distinguish it from both deductive and inductive reasoning. Researchers proceeding from knowledge-based conceptions of cognition have also questioned the application of Piagetian theory to historical thinking. Levstik and Pappas (1987) suggested that knowledge differences rather than global constraints may account for age-related patterns in responses to historical questions. While this research suggested that historical thinking is possible at a younger age than had once been assumed, it has not necessarily established the lower age limits for historical thinking.

As recent reviews of research in the field indicate, the literature on the historical learning of young children is quite limited (Downey & Levstik, 1989, 1991). Much of what does exist has focused on children's conception of time. Research on language development indicates that children learn the distinctions between past, present, and future early in childhood (Wells, 1981, 1985; Harner, 1982). Children begin to develop an understanding of concepts of historical time by age five (Jahoda, 1963; Thornton & Vukelich, 1988). Until then, concepts of time, whether conventional (clock and calendar) or historical time, have little influence on children's thought (Friedman, 1978). They are capable of estimating how long ago events took place and to place events in chronological sequence by age eight or nine (Friedman, 1978; Bradley, 1947; Oakden & Sturt, 1922). By that age children are also able to use such terms as "a long time

ago" and can place historical dates in correct sequences. Children in British studies could understand by age 9 that Robin Hood lived before their mother's or grandmother's time (Bradley, 1947; but see Applebee, 1978). By age 10 to 12, American students can use more refined labels for historical periods, such as "the Civil War era" (Levstik & Papas, 1987). Levstik and Pappas also found that children by age ten were capable of engaging in modest theory generation about the nature of history. Applebee (1978) suggests that embedding time concepts in narrative presentations helps make them comprehensible to children at a young age.

The above studies suggested that the students that the project intended to target were old enough to understand basic concepts of historical time. Whether they could also distinguish between history and the past was less certain. The Levstik and Pappas study (1987) provides the only data that bears directly upon this question. Consequently, it merits closer attention here.

The Levstik and Pappas study suggests that young students can distinguish between the past and history. At least, the students in their sample could do so. Their sample consisted of twenty-four students, with eight from each of the second, fourth, and sixth grades. The students attended a predominantly middle-class school in a medium-sized metropolitan community in the Upper South. Prior to the interview, the students had listened to a historical story, which they were then asked to retell in their own words and to respond to a set of questions, one of which was "What is 'history?'"

Levstik and Pappas found that more than half of the fourth- and six-grade students, and nearly half of the second-grade students in their sample defined history as the significant past. That is, they could

differentiate between history and the past. The major determinants of historical significance were that events and people had to be "famous," "important" or "tragic." The second and fourth graders dwelled more on tragedy and violence; the sixth-graders were more likely to mention the role of historical events in bringing about important changes. Developmental levels may have been reflected in the criteria students gave for judging significance, but not in their capacity to do so.

The research undertaken by the Writing to Learn History Project differs in several respects from the Levstik and Pappas study. In the first place, the latter study involved the single task of listening to and retelling a story. The present project engages students in a series of instructional activities that continue over a period of several weeks. As this project is also concerned about whether writing activities can foster the development of historical thinking, it assessed student thinking both before and after the period of instruction. It also uses a student population with more diverse socio-economic characteristics than the Levstik and Pappas study. And it is guided by a somewhat broader conception of the term history. Nevertheless, the research questions were sufficiently similar that the Levstik and Pappas research was able to serve as a point of departure for the present effort.

This chapter is a report on the Writing to Learn History Project's findings concerning this one dimension of historical thinking. It addresses two questions. First, can third and fourth grade students distinguish between history and the past, as the Levstik and Pappas study suggests? Secondly, can instructional activities that emphasize writing foster historical thinking of this kind? Sufficient data has been collected to address these questions. However, this paper will not attempt to account

for differences among the performances of the student populations involved in the study.

METHODOLOGY

School Sites and Student Populations

For this project, data was collected from students at each of three school sites. The first site was a third-grade classroom in Alameda, California, where data collection began in September 1991. The Alameda site, which for the purpose of this project is called Bay School, was selected because it had a diverse student population typical of inner-city schools in the Bay Area. About 10 percent of the students in the research classroom were ESL students. The students were primarily from blue-collar and lower middle class socio-economic backgrounds. A representative sample of twenty-one students were selected initially, with the group eventually pared down to sixteen students. That proved to be the maximum number that one researcher could monitor.

Beginning in September 1992, data on student definitions of history were collected at two school sites in Oakland. Of the two Oakland sites, the one that is here called Flatland School is a school in a low-income neighborhood that has a substantial number of Limited English Proficient students. A language other than English is spoken in about 80 percent of the homes of the students in the research classroom. Including this school made it possible to explore the important question being raised in a study by Valdez and Wong (in progress) about whether and under what conditions a writing-oriented approach to learning will work with LEP students. The second school, called Foothills School in this report, draws students from one of Oakland's middle-class, predominantly white neighborhoods.

The student population in the Writing to Learn History study differed from that of the Levstik and Pappas research in two important respects. first, there are major socio-economic-ethnic differences, with the California study including a substantial number of students who are immigrants or the children of recent immigrants. The students from two of the schools were from predominantly working-class neighborhoods. Only the students at Foothill School were comparable as a group to those in the Levstik-Pappas study.

Research Procedures

The research subjects in each classroom consisted of a sample of sixteen students. They are selected each September with the help of the classroom teacher to obtain a sample that is representative of the socio-economic composition of the class and, in so far as possible, of the school. The students in the research sample are treated like and are nearly indistinguishable from the non-sample students, except that they are called out of the classroom for interviews at the beginning and end of each unit.

Each student in the sample was interviewed at the beginning of the unit to collect baseline data. The interviews lasted about 30 minutes and were tape recorded. Among the questions asked was "What is history?" The initial interviews also assessed the students' knowledge of the content of that particular unit of instruction. The interviews at the end of the unit again asked the question" What is history?" and probed for changes in how the students' defined the term. The final interviews also contained lists of questions to see what students had learned about the unit topic. The responses from these interviews will be examined for each school site in turn.

RESULTS

Bay School Students' Understanding of the Concept of History

The students at Bay School were asked to define history on three occasions: two at the outset of instruction and one at the end. The first was an oral interview conducted with an initial group of 21 students. Only 11 students were asked the question in the interview, as it was added to the research agenda midway through the interview process. The second occasion was a student log entry assignment, in which they had to provide a written response to the question "What is history?" Twenty-three students responded to this question in writing. The question was asked a third time during the final interview after the period of instruction was completed.

The word history was not part of the vocabulary of the majority of the Bay School students at the outset of instruction. Of the twenty-three students who responded in their logs, seventeen could not define the term. Nine left the line blank or responded "I do not know." Eight others associated "history" with the school curriculum, but did not define it in terms recognizable as part of the social studies.

> "I think it means like when somebody is having a history test."
>
> "I think it means drawing."
>
> "It means writing."

Several students confused history with science.

> "History is seine [science]."
>
> "Seince"
>
> "I don't know. I think it means learning siense."
>
> "It means siense."

"I think it means art scince."

Only five students related the term to the past, usually making the two synonymous.

"History means something that happened long ago."

"History is someone who is a star that is old."

"Lrne abote dinusur's"

"People talk about it thoow lot of years."

"It means thing that happed in the pats."

One student thought it meant being gone or dead: "It means you are going to be nothing," perhaps in the colloquial sense of "If you don't watch your step, you'll be history."

During the baseline interviews conducted earlier, eleven students were asked about the meaning of the term. Four associated the term with the past. Their verbal responses were more expansive than the written journal entries. Student X, who wrote the journal "People talk about it thoow lot of years," said the following:

Interviewer: Do you know what the word history means?

Student X: Well, they talk about it a lot of times. That's all I know about it.

Interviewer: Who talks about it?

Student X: About kings and queens and princesses and princes."

Interviewer: Were Indians a part of history?

Student X: Yes

Interviewer: Was anything else a part of history?"

Student X: Dinosaurs.

For the most part, the students who associated the term history with the past defined it as synonymous with the past. Only one student of the

eleven interviewed defined history as the significant past. He was an exceptionally articulate student, by far and away the most articulate student in the class.

Interviewer: What makes a thing history then? You just mentioned "some pretty serious things."

Student J.: Well really serious things, important things that changed their future. And so they want to learn about that, so, you know, they want to learn about it, find out more things about it, if they can.

Interviewer: Changed whose future?

Student J: You know, like things that happen today might change what will happen tomorrow, you know, someone might get into a sweat and tomorrow they won't.

Interviewer: Is that history?

Student J.: No, its kind of an example.

Interviewer:What about mothers and fathers going off to work in the morning and coming back at night? Is that history? Would that be history in the future?

Student J.: Well if they went to work and Michael Jackson stopped by and asked them if he could use the bathroom, that would be history.

Interviewer: It has to have a Michael Jackson in it does it?

Student J.: No.

Interviewer: What makes it history then?

Student J.: It makes it history because it is something exciting that doesn't happen every day.

Interviewer: O.K. Unusual things?

Student J.: Yeah, like things you know that don't have to be usual, but . . . was Desert Storm unusual?

Interviewer: Well, was it?

Student J.: No, something that's happening that was really the main focus in something that everyone was thinking about at that time.

Interviewer: OK, if its a big deal and involves a lot of people, then its. . . ?

Student J.: It doesn't have to involve a lot of people but if its a really big deal, its history.

Interviewer: OK, I think I understand what you mean by that.

Student J.: You know if was history if, you know, my Mom went to work, there would be two million, billion, thousand, million, quadruple, a million, trillion, million things of history happening in just one day. Just think, the Guinness Book of World Records would be stacked with pages up to the moon.

During the next five months, the students at Bay School were engaged in a variety of history-learning activities focused on the Ohlone Indians of the San Francisco Bay Area. Many of the activities involved writing. They worked with artifacts placed at stations around the classroom and wrote questions prompted by these items. They took a field trip to an historic site and wrote down lists of things they had learned there. They wrote narratives about their personal experiences in the past and discussed with the principal researcher whether these events were could be considered history. Finally, they were asked to write a piece of historical fiction set in Ohlone Indian times. The character had to be a young person of their own age. The only other requirement was that the

story had to have a problem that the character would resolve. They worked on this assignment during their writing workshop time over a period of six weeks. The end product was a "published" book, word processed by the classroom teacher, which they illustrated by drawing and coloring pictures. A final round of interviews was then conducted.

During the final interview, twelve of the Bay School students were asked the following questions: "What is history?" "Is history everything that happened in the past or just some things?" Unclear and inconsistent responses to the second question were followed by various, probing questions until the students settled upon one answer. This was their first encounter with the "What is history?" question since the October baseline interviews and log assignment. At no time during the months of learning about Ohlone Indians had the question been raised or alluded to.

This time all of the students could at least define history as something that happened in the past. Four of the twelve students made a distinction between the ordinary past and the significant past. For these students, history consisted only of those events that someone considered significant.

> Interviewer: What is history?
>
> Student O : Things that have gone in the past and stuff that's been real, real famous and stuff. . . Like you can make history by being famous.

All four students had some variation of this response. History is "really big things, really big, that happened," Student V. said. Or, as Student J. noted, "History means stuff that happened a long time ago, that was famous or something like that.

Interviewer: . . . Was everything that happened a long time ago history or just some things history?

Student J: Well, everything that happened long ago was history, but there was famous history and just history. Like Martin Luther King. That was famous history. . . . But the Ohlones, they're just history.

Student O made still another level of distinction. Somethings the Ohlones did was real history, some things were not.

Interviewer: . . . If he [an Ohlone] went out one day and shot an arrow into the weeds and lost it, is that history?

Student O: No.

Interviewer: Why not?

Student O: 'Cause any Ohlone person can do that.

Interviewer: Well that happened in the past. So some things are history, that happened in the past, and some things aren't?

Student O: Uh-huh [yes].

Interviewer: What makes the difference?

Student O: Like say you just throw something into the weeds, that wouldn't be called history. You'd just be part of history. You wouldn't be real, real history. You'd just be part of an Ohlone-like history.

Interviewer: OK, what would be real, real history?

Student O: Like if. . . you killed something that everyone really, really wanted to be killed. . . .If it was a person or an animal or something. You killed it. . . .

Interviewer: But you have to do something that's like killing somebody to. . . .

Student O: Or like be brave, be something, not just a person.

Student G likewise saw history as something in the past that stood out from the ordinary.

Interviewer: What's history?

Student G: It's ind of something that you learn about that was probably in the past.

Interviewer: Is everything that happened in the past history?

Student G: No.

Interviewer: . . . What if an Ohlone Indian got up in the morning, 300 years ago, is that history?

Student G: No.

Interviewer: Why?

Student G: Because it's really not something. . . . People already know that you wake up. . . .

Interviewer: What would that person have to do to do something that would be history?

Student G: He would probably go out and hunt and catch all the animals that they eat.

Why were these students able to make such a distinction? The explanation does not seem to be that they were more intelligent or better students than their peers. There was a strongly negative correlation between previous school performance and being able to make that distinction. On a three-category scale of previous school performance (low-medium-high), only two of the four were placed by their teacher in the "high" category. Seven other students rated as "high" had not made the distinction. As the other two students were rated "medium" by their

teacher, students in that category were just as likely as the "high" students to differentiate between the ordinary and the significant past.

The only characteristic that these students seemed to have in common and which distinguished them from their non-discriminating peers was their ethnic-linguistic background. Three of the four who made the distinction were native-born Caucasian students from native-English-speaking families. Conversely, none of the Limited English Proficient students, students with Asian and Filipino ethnic background, and none of the native-born African-American students made such a distinction. Of the other two native-born Caucasian students in the research sample, one also stopped short of defining history as synonymous with the past. His definition was highly idiosyncratic, with history consisting only of memories that a person might have of his own past. The fourth student in the group of discriminating students was a recent immigrant. While not native-born, this student was fully proficient in English. Thus, the critical correlation seems to be fluency in standard English, although whether that correlation has much explanatory power remains to be seen.

Foothills School Students' Understanding of the Concept of History

The fourth-grade students at Foothills School were much better informed about the meaning of the term history than were the third-grade students at Bay School. In the initial interview, all sixteen students in the research sample defined history as something related to the past, compared to fewer than one-fourth of the Bay School students. Moreover, half of the Foothills School students also made a distinction between history and the past or devised a two-track system "just kind of" history and "real" history. Only one-fourth of the Bay School students had done so by the time of the final interview.

The kind of instruction that the Foothills School students received following the initial interview was comparable to that at Bay School. The students took part in a variety of history-learning activities that involved writing. The content of instruction differed somewhat. The unit began with a review of the Native Americans, but focused on the Spanish-Mexican period of California History. The major difference was the time allotted to instruction. As most teachers do not devote two-thirds of the year to a single history unit, the time allotted was sharply reduced to provide a more typical classroom setting. The unit received 7 weeks , less than half the time devoted to the Native American unit at Bay School.

At the end of the unit of instruction, the students in the research sample were interviewed again and once more asked the question "What is history?" The responses revealed substantial changes in the Foothill School students' conception of history. All but six students substantially revised their definition. Three who had not made a distinction between the past and the significant past in the initial interview did so in the final interview. Seven others, almost half the research group, came up with a substantially new definition, one that had not been mentioned by any student during the first interview.

These seven students had redefined history to mean a way of learning or a process of inquiry that actively involved them. For some the involvement was minimal, mainly looking up information in books.

Interviewer: What does the word history mean to you?

Student Z: "It means looking up things that you don't know about. . . . Like Columbus, if you do [not?] know about Columbus. . . . Look up Columbus in your history book.

For others, it meant a more substantial kind of investigation:

Student D: It means stuff that you can learn, stuff than happened long ago. . . .

Interviewer: How do you learn these things?

Student D: You can learn them out of books, from teachers or museums.

For several students, the process also involved the writing of history:

Interviewer: What does the word history mean to you?

Student A: To learn about things that happened a long time ago.

Interviewer: What do you mean by learn about?

Student A: Ah, well, not really learn about, to, ah, get information, maybe.

Interviewer: . . . Do you want to tell me about what you mean by get information?

Student A: Well to learn something. Or, you know, look in books, you know, put it in your own words, and write things that happened a long time ago."

Or, as another student said:

Student C: It means to me that you're going back in time in all these books, you're going back in time and learning more about it. And then come back and then you write it, what you learned.

And still another:

Student E: You bring it back to learn more about it even though you weren't there.

Interviewer: How do you do that?

Student E: Well you look in books. . . .

Interviewer: Anything else you do in that sense of bringing it back?

Student E: Well, you can always write about it.

Interviewer: Do you enjoy doing that?

Student E: Yeah.

Flatland School Students Understanding of the Concept of History

In the initial interview at Flatland School, about half (9 of 17) of the students did not know what the word history meant. Their lack of familiarity with the term was comparable to that of the Bay School third-grade students. Of the remaining 8 students, 5 equated history with the past and 3 made a distinction between the past and the significant past. Only one of the third-grade student had made such a distinction at Bay School. Half of the Foothills students had done during the initial interivew. In other words, the definitions provided by the Flatland School students fell about midway between the third-graders at Bay School and the fourth-grade students at Foothills. This suggests a possible developmental variable, as the Flatland School students are a mixed third-fourth grade class.

When the Flatland School group was interviewed again at the end of instruction, three students could still not know what the word history meant. The word was used frequently during the period of instruction, but had never been explicitly defined. In the final interviews, six students made a distinction between the past and as the significant or historic past. This was fewer than the Foothills School students, where 11 of the 16 students defined history either as the significant past or as a process of inquiry about the past. Only one of the Flatland School students came close to the latter kind of definition. Student F, who distinguished between history and the past, also said that history was "learning about the past."

CONCLUSIONS

Two questions were posed at the outset of this chapter. The first was whether elementary school children in the third and fourth grades are developmentally capable of making distinctions between history and the past? It was suggested that the ability to make this distinction is central to reflective historical thinking. The second question was whether classroom instruction that emphasizes writing activities can foster the development of this ability.

The findings reported above indicate that elementary students vary greatly in their understanding of the term "history." The differences between the third-grade Bay School students and the fourth-grade Foothill School students was most striking. The word history was not part of the vocabulary of most of the students at Bay School when they were first interviewed. All of the fourth-grade students at Foothills School at least associated the term with things that had happened in the past. Fully half of the latter students also distinguished in one way or another between history and the past. Several of the Flatland School students also made such distinctions, although not as many as at Foothills School.

Change as a result of instruction also differed significantly among the three groups of students. While all of the Bay School students associated history with the past at the end of the unit of instruction, only 4 of the 12 students made a distinction between history and the past. In contrast, only 5 of the 15 Foothill School students continued to define the two synonymously. Nearly half had devised a new definition that emphasized history as a process of inquiry in which they were directly involved. History meant enquiring into and writing about the past. For these students, history taught with a writing-oriented approach did produce a

substantial change in their conception of history. They had arrived at a definition of history that was reasonably close to that held by most historians.

Whether the differences between the students at the three research sites is primarily a developmental difference or one grounded in socio-economic variables is uncertain. The Foothill School students were a year older than the Bay School students. But there are also significant socio-economic differences between the two schools. Foothills School drew from a middle-class to upper-middle class neighborhood. Many of the students parents were professionals, including teachers. There also are differences in the students's linguistic backgrounds. English was the native language or language spoken in the home of all but one student in the Foothills School research sample. The Flatland School students, on the other hand, were predominantly Limited English Proficient students, as were many of the Bay School students.

CHAPTER 5
WRITING AND HISTORICAL THINKING WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT STUDENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Writing to Learn History Project at the University of California, Berkeley is investigating how writing can facilitate the development of children's historical thinking. The study has posed two principal questions. Can elementary school students, including children in inner-city schools who have limited English proficiency, engage in historical thinking in a meaningful way? What kind of writing activities best serve this purpose?

These questions are problematic. In the first place, there is a lack of consensus about what is historical thinking. It has been defined by cognitive theorists, empirical researchers, and curriculum developers in quite different ways. Moreover, little has been written about how to assess such thinking--however defined--in instructional settings. This paper describes one aspect of historical thinking investigated by the Writing to Learn History Project in a 5th-grade classroom in Oakland, California and how criteria used to assess it were developed. The study has implications for future research on historical thinking and for the development of a thinking curriculum in history.

A substantial body of theory and research concerned with historical thinking has focused on the development of logical thinking using history materials. It is grounded in Piagetian theory. In the mid-1960s, E. A. Peal, a British psychologist, reported that stages of development similar to those which Piaget found in mathematical and scientific thinking could also be

identified in historical reasoning (Peal, 1965, 1967). During the next two decades, a great deal of work was done in Britain elaborating Peel's findings, most notably by Hallam (1966, 1967). The principal finding of the Peel-Hallam school was that students reached the concrete and formal operational stage in historical thinking considerably later than had Piaget's students in the other disciplines. "Hallam's students reached the concrete operational stage at about age 13, rather than at age 7 or 8 for Piaget's students; formal operational thinking began at about age 16 in history, compared to age 12 in Paiget's research" (Downey and Levstik, 1988). This line of research has not been fruitful for investigating historical thinking among elementary school students, as it assumes that only pre-operational thinking is possible in the lower grades. This places a severe constraint on instruction designed to emphasize historical thinking. It has also been severely criticized for misrepresenting historical thought, which may be an autonomous domain quite unlike logical thinking in mathematics and science (Levstik, 1986).

Researchers primarily interested in historical thinking among younger children have focused on their understanding of historical time. This work is rooted in empirical research undertaken by psychologists interested in children's understanding of time concepts generally (Oakden and Sturt, 1922; Ames, 1946; Bradley, 1947; Springer, 1952; Jahoda, 1962). Some recent research, conducted primarily by educators rather than psychologists, has focused on the development of children's sense of historical time (Poster, 1973; Lello, 1980; Levstik and Pappas, 1987; Thornton and Vukelich, 1988; Downey, 1994). These researchers have been interested primarily in children's grasp of chronology and understanding of broad time categories. They have found that children's

understanding of time concepts follows a developmental progression and that children can understand general time concepts in the early elementary grades. While this research suggests that history can be introduced at lower grade levels than many educators have assumed, it has little to say about the role of instruction in the development of historical thinking.

A third approach to historical thinking has emphasized the development of historical empathy. Most of the theoretical and empirical work on historical empathy has been done in Britain, where educators have focused on developing curriculum that emphasizes historical thinking (Samec, 1979). The goal is to enable students to project themselves imaginatively into an historical situation and to let them use their "mind's eye" to bring intuitive observation and judgment into play (Portal. 1987). Ashby and Lee (1987) describe the achievement of empathy as "where we get to when we have successfully reconstructed other peoples' beliefs, values, goals, and attendant feelings" (p.63).

The empathy approach to historical thinking seems quite promising. While no one suggests that historical empathy is easy to acquire, it does seem to be teachable. "Empathy," Ashby and Lee emphasize, "is an achievement, not a particular process" (1987, p.63). It is achieved by acquiring knowledge, developing a range of skills, and by being willing to empathize with people whose ideas and values "are not one's own, and with which one may profoundly disagree" (p. 63). While developmental constraints may come into play at various points, no one has yet suggested that elementary students are incapable of historical empathy.

Indeed, current classroom practice suggests that many teachers assume that activities that call for empathetic responses are especially

appropriate for elementary school students. Teachers often use activities that engage students in imaginative reconstructions about how people lived in the past. Among those commonly used are writing assignments that involve role playing. Such assignments ask students to write first-person narratives from the perspective of some imaginary character who could have lived at a particular time. It may be a story about a "day in my life," mock journal entries or letter writing activities. Such writing activities may provide an easy entrée for the more systematic introduction of historical thinking into the school curriculum, as teachers are familiar with the genre and students seem to like doing it.

However promising in terms of classroom practice, empathy does have its own set of conceptual and definitional problems. As empathy has gained popularity among curriculum developers, especially in Britain, it also attracted a growing number of critics. Boddington (1980) has pointed out that the term itself is highly ambiguous. Is empathy simply a synonym for understanding others, as in imaginatively putting oneself in another's place, or does it involve an affective response to another's situation. Is emotional identification essential to historical empathy or do the attendant feelings obstruct understanding? Knight (1989) argues that the very use of the term empathy is an obstacle to clear thinking. "Empathy is a unitary construct, carrying with it the implication that there is a single, discrete operation, 'empathizing', which the learner develops over time" (p. 46). Instead, he suggests that teachers concentrate on the analysis of the multiplicity of factors that are involved in trying to understand people in the past.

In seeking an operational definition of historical thinking, the Writing to Learn History Project has taken a middle ground. It has

adopted a position similar to the one that Boddington has described as a "weak sense of empathy" rather than the more strongly affective kind. "Such an activity," Boddington (1980) suggests, "might be seen then not primarily as a creative activity, but rather as a rational, intellectual activity concerned with explaining actions, attitudes and concepts which are alien to our own" (p. 18). To more clearly differentiate between the two, the project uses the term "perspective taking" instead of empathy. To engage in historical perspective taking is to attempt to understand an historical character's frame of reference, without assuming that one can or needs to identify with his or her feelings. The project also assumes, along with Seixas (in press) and Knight, that empathy or perspective taking is only one of a number of "critical elements of historical thinking."

While this may resolve the definitional problem, it does not make perspective taking an easy task. Explaining attitudes or actions alien to our own is surely one of the most difficult aspects of historical reconstruction. Besides, how can one step into the shoes of someone who lived in the past when it is impossible to leave the present behind? Obviously, perspective taking, even in this non-affective sense, is not fully attainable. The question is, as Seixas (in press) suggests, how can we confront the difficulties inherent in this task in ways that help students become more expert at doing it?

The time clearly is at hand for history educators in the United States to be raising such questions. Historical thinking is now emerging as a popular topic in school reform literature here much as it did in Britain two decades ago. The development of historical thinking has become one of the major justifications for history's place in the public school curriculum. The California History-Social Science Framework and a companion document

entitled With History-Social Science For All: Access for Every Student (California Department of Education, 1987, 1992), stressed the importance of helping students develop a sense of historical empathy. A national curriculum report issued in 1988 by the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools referred to valuable "habits of mind" that the study of history makes possible (Bradley Commission, 1988). In 1994, the National History Standards Project included historical thinking among the standards that it urged state and schools districts to adopt. Its publication, National Standards for United States History (National Center for History in the Schools, 1994) accorded historical thinking equal status with knowledge or content standards. The entrance of historical thinking into the arena of public policy lends some degree of urgency to the task of defining it and devising ways to assess it.

The question of assessment poses its own set of problems. "Traditionally," Boddington (1980) writes, "such assessment is modeled upon the 'imagine you were. . .' type of question" (p.16). But, as he points out, this approach to testing invites highly affective and individualistic responses. It may even be inappropriate to determine in advance what is or is not a good answer. "Since both the response of the student and the perceptions of the assessor are grounded in different and unique experiences, it is quite possible that we might not recognize a 'good answer' when we see it" (p. 17). Questions that prompt affective responses also may not be appropriate to evaluate perspective-taking that emphasize explanation rather than empathy. If perspective taking is to be proposed as a central component of historical thinking in the classroom, it is essential that appropriate criteria be developed to assess the quality of the performance.

THE RESEARCH AT FLATLAND SCHOOL

During the fall semester of 1993, the Writing to Learn History Project conducted research in a 5th grade classroom in Oakland to investigate whether students with limited English proficiency could successfully engage in historical thinking. Perspective taking was one of several components that were involved. The project director was especially concerned about whether such activities were accessible to all students in classrooms in which the level of language proficiency varied considerably. Are perspective taking and other elements of historical thinking a suitable basis for democratic curriculum reform or do they raise the specter of a two-tiered curriculum in which English proficient students engage in historical thinking while others memorize information and take multiple-choice tests?

The research took place in a split fourth/fifth-grade classroom in an inner-city school in Oakland, California. It was a class predominantly composed of Hispanic and African-American students. Although the entire class of 31 students participated in the instruction, 17 students were selected as the focus of the research. All but two of the 4th grade students were excluded from the sample as well as the 5th grade students who could only speak and write in Spanish. The two 4th grade students who remained in the group were comparable in age and in language proficiency to the 5th grade students. As it was assumed that the quality of perspective taking would reflect differences in language proficiency, the 17 students were identified according to high, intermediate, and low levels of English language proficiency. This identification was based on their performance on an English writing sample and the teacher's assessment of their language proficiency. All but one of the students was born in the

United States and all listed English as their primary language. However, Spanish was the dominant language spoken at home for 8 of the 17 students.

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Data on historical thinking was collected during a 6-week period when the students were engaged in a unit on American Indians and Spanish colonization in the Southwest. The unit included two writing assignments that called for perspective taking. The first was a "day in the life" activity, in which the students were to assume the identity of a American Indian and write a first-person account of what they did on a typical day. They were told that they should take a "mind trip" back to the times when Indians were the only people who lived in what is now the United States. It took place during the second week of instruction, after the students had completed a week's instruction that focused on comparative Indian cultures.

At the beginning of the activity, the students were given a list of questions to which they were encouraged to respond. It included such items as: What did you do that day? What kind of dwelling do you live in? What kind of clothes are you wearing? They were asked to write in the first person, present tense and as they wrote they should keep asking the question, "Does This Make Indian Sense?" It was explained that Indians belonged to pre-literate cultures and that they would not actually have written such accounts, but that it was important for the research project to have a written record of their responses. As resource materials, each student had an information packet on one of five different tribes. Their character that they were role playing had to be a member of that tribe. These packets included pictures and other information about food,

dwellings, and clothing. The students wrote for half an hour each day on three successive class periods. It was emphasized that their writing was to be a rough draft copy, and that they were not to worry about erasing or spelling.

The second writing assignment was a mock correspondence, in which they were asked to take the perspective of a Spanish colonist. This assignment came after ten 75-minute class periods in which they had learned about the Spanish colonization of the American Southwest. It consisted of two activities. In the first, they were to write a letter to a cousin in Spain describing their life in colonial New Mexico. The question was whether they would be able to shift from the Indian to the Spanish perspective? They were given a set of questions comparable to those handed out at the beginning of the Indian writing assignment:

1. Where do you live: village, farm, rancho?
2. What is your name?
3. What does you house look like?
4. What does a room in your house look like?
5. What are you wearing?
6. What did you eat that day?
7. What did you do with your friends?
8. What did the grown-ups do? (or children if they are taking the role of an adult)

In the second activity, the students had to respond to a letter from the Spanish cousin received in reply to their first letter. In it, the cousin accused them of unfairly taking over the Indians' land and suggested they all move back to Mexico. The question was whether the students could

maintain the Spanish colonists' perspective when it came into direct conflict with their earlier commitment to the Indians' point of view?

The students wrote for about 70 minutes over 2 days on the first part of the assignment, with three of the most promising papers read and discussed half-way through, to serve as models for those having difficulty. They spent a comparable period of time on the second writing activity.

A set of criteria was developed to assess the quality of the students' perspective taking. In the students' writings about an historical period, what qualifies as "viewing the world from another's perspective" and what does not? Three criteria were adopted at the outset of the research. First, it was assumed that successful perspective taking would require expression through a first-person narrative. It would presumably require a sense of personal involvement on the student's part, and that first-person narrative writing would facilitate this. Secondly, they had to include enough descriptive detail to lodge the character in the appropriate place and time. The assumption was that contextualization and perspective taking were intimately related. Finally, it seemed axiomatic that historical errors and anachronism were incompatible with successful perspective taking. This set of criteria proved to be seriously inadequate, although that did not become apparent until much of the data was collected and analyzed.

RESULTS

In response to the first assignment, most of the students wrote quite detailed narratives that described the setting in which their historical persona lived. They had little difficulty visualizing a landscape much different than that which they see around them today. They could also reconstruct parts of the routine of everyday life, such as Indians bathing in

a river and hunting with bows and arrows. They described food that was different from that of their own time, recognized that their Indian persona wore home-made clothes, and surrounded their character with historically appropriate artifacts (misspellings and punctuation errors in the original will be retained throughout this report):

"Me and my friends went to get berries to eat [for] dinner." (Peter)

"My friend is gathering roots, seeds, and berries." (Susan)

"My wife made my clothes" (Alberto).

"So I got my bow and arrows and left my dwelling that is made of tree branches and animel hides." (Susan)

"I am washing my her [hair] with the soap roth [root]." (Maria)

While the narratives were not entirely free of historical error, the majority of the students created reasonably accurate historical contexts.

However, there were clear differences between the three language proficiency groups. Samuel, who was in the top group, wrote a narrative about Washakie, a Shoshoni leader, that presented a believable Indian perspective. His first paragraph read as follows:

> "When I went outside acspecting to see the usual rouged land but to my surprise I see the eagle king of All birds A coyotay A big brown bear A few tree[s] right ther And there I knew I was blessed. I was whering my usual cloths made of fine be[a]r hide at breakfast that my wife had mde for me. I ate some Acron squash when the chief Aproach me and he ws saying, Washakie, you have been blesed by the Anamals therefor when I die you will take my place as chief,

but until then we shall dance for our sellabrashon. The next day he died."

Washakie's encountering an eagle, coyote, and bear on the same morning was a sign that he had been blessed and was the rightful successor to the village chief. After the death of the chief, Washakie became the new village leader.

On the other hand, James, who was in the lowest proficiency group, wrote a paragraph that was little more than a list of things Indians did:

"They would play Indian Games. they wold hunt for foods. Rabbit, wolf, bird, deer. They lived in hogans. It would be fun to live in a hogan. We didn't have shoes. We didn't have cloths. we work on getting food and cloths. They traveled from many places. California to Mexico. An teh Indians would suck the blood from deer and other animals." (James)

There was also a quantitative difference between the upper two groups and the bottom group. The more proficient students tended to write longer and more detailed narratives.

The second assignment, the two letters written by a Spanish settler to a cousin in Spain, produced comparable results. As in the Indian activity, the students had little difficulty providing detailed descriptions of their house, their clothing, and their daily routine. The following references are representative:

"The inside [of his house] has a few windows A fireplace And a low table And some pot and pans and beans. And I am wearing A subraro and some plan cloths A vest a pants and a white shirt." (Samuel)

"Today I eat tacos de carne and beans and chili." (Enrico)

"I have a big house. It is made out of adobe." (Alonzo)

"I play with my friend Monice. We are best friend." (Sara)

"The next day we have a rodeo and after the rodeo we dance all night." (Susan)

There were several instances of historical anachronisms. For example, Susan's adobe house had "3 rooms and 2 bathrooms," while Samuel's village on the New Mexican frontier "has lots of houses and churches and lots of nice people and I like the restaurants." But, for the most part, the students' descriptions of the context in which their character lived were historically accurate.

As detailed and generally accurate as the students' narratives were, most of them stopped far short of perspective taking in any meaningful sense of that term. The failure to present an historical perspective was most pronounced for the Indian assignment. Only Samuel's portrayal of Washakie came close to presenting an Indian world view. The most serious problems were not factual inaccuracies, but what might be called structural anachronisms. Students, as Seixas (1993) has written, "may mistakenly assume that people living in different circumstances nevertheless thought in ways essentially similar to themselves." The problem lies in the students "failure to realize what they don't know about the past." (Seixas, in press). They also assumed that Indians acted in ways similar to them. No amount of context, however detailed and factually accurate, was sufficient to save most of the students from this pitfall.

The students had great difficulty disengaging their character's thoughts and actions from their own time. There were glaring anachronisms in the structure and processes of everyday life. The daily

routines that were described were very much like the routines of present-day children. The characters got up in the morning, bathed, put on their clothes, ate breakfast and went out to play. Sara's character was an Apache girl, whose morning routine included waking up her sister and brother:

> "Then I went to my sister teepee, then my b[r]other['s] teepee. I woke them and took them to the river to wach there hands and face."

She assumed that Indian children slept in separate teepees, just as American children today have individual bedrooms. Donald had the Indian children in his narrative celebrating a birthday with parties and gifts.

The students' narratives also were oblivious to the difficulties American Indians faced in finding enough food to stay alive. Donald's character and his friend killed a deer and a buffalo one day. "And then we toke it home to eat it lader on and then it was giting dark and we put a fire and eat the bufalo and deer all together" There was no sense of the skill required to hunt and kill wild game or of hunting as a communal undertaking. The same was true for Susan: "I walk to the river. I see a bear. I'm runing back to my dwelling. . . . Im goig to get my bows and arrow. . . . I shot him. I am going to pick him up and take him home. . . . " Both students make hunting as easy as buying groceries from Safeway. Although Susan who wrote one of the most carefully detailed narratives, her character thought and acted like a modern-day girl. "Today I wake up and ate a squirrel leg and drink a berrire drink," as if convenience foods and bottled juice were staples of Indian life.

Some of the problems the students had with perspective taking reoccurred in the second assignment. In assessing their ability to shift from the Indian to the Spanish colonial perspective, the critical test was their Spanish character's perception of Indians. The first letter called for at least some mention of Indians, as the cousin in Spain had expressed an interest in Indians. The second letter directly confronted the issue of Spain's taking over Indian land, as the cousin in his/her reply had suggested that the Spanish give back the land to the Indians.

Several of the students had difficulty, in their role as Spanish colonists, distancing themselves from the Indians. Anna had foreshadowed this problem in her first letter to her cousin, by including the Indians among her friends and playmates.

> The Indians and os we are good friens. The indians p[l]ay with os is fun wen you come to New Mexico I will thell. We are good family with all the pueblo indians. (Anna)

Even Sara's character Elvira, whose family owned an Apache slave, wrote that "Indian are very nice I have some Indian friend."

The resistance to placing themselves in opposition to Indians was decidedly more pronounced in the second letter to the cousin in Spain. Five of the students agreed that the land should be returned to the Indians. Enrico and James would do so immediately:

> "Juan de Onate took land away from the Indians but I think I am going to give back them land and leave New Mexico I am gona come back to Spain. . . . I don't whant to take away the Indians land be cause we have are one [own] land in Spain. . . but anyway this land is thems." (Enrico)

"I think we should give New Mexico back to the Indians. . . . The Indians must be said [sad]." (James)

Sara, Ernesto, and Donald also agreed that they should give the Indians back their land. But Sara concluded that there was nothing she could do about it, and Ernesto and Donald decided that the other Spanish colonists would get mad at them if they made such a proposal.

However, seven students made reasoned arguments about why they should not give back the land. They justified keeping it in two ways, both of which reflected a creditable Spanish perspective. Gloria's character would not leave because her family had a stake in the land.

> "I am not going to leave New Mexico for anything. Its because this is wher I was rased as a small kid and my family came here. And ther is no way that anything or anybody is going to make me go away from my familys land!" (Gloria)

Paula's character took a similar stand.

> "I know that the Indians were here befor us but we had to take it away because we didn't have no place to live and now we live here and we are not giving it back." (Paula)

The second argument was a justification based on the reciprocal relationship that had, in fact, emerged between the Pueblo and Spanish villages in New Mexico. Samuel phrased it best:

> "They said we can live on their land. . . . When Juan de Onate took their land and gave the[m] nothing in return that was unfair and it fair because they give us land and we help them fight back when other tribe try to raid them." (Samuel)

That was also the position taken by Anna, Enrico, Susan, and Maria.

As the arguments for keeping the land suggest, more of the students succeeded in the Spanish assignment than in the previous one in creating characters who thought and acted in culturally and historically appropriate ways. Enrico's character liked to ride horses and enjoyed dancing.

> "I went wihte my friends to dance la quebrodita that is a new dance that I like I have a horse that I call the black Rayo because is black and run so fast." (Enrico)

Gloria invented games for her character to play that probably have no modern-day equivalent.

> "We played with rocks and sang a song a[nd] passed the rocks to the next person but still singing the song." (Gloria)

The people in Sara and Samuel's family slept on the floor, presumably on pallets, and not in modern beds. Elvira, who was Sara's colonial persona, lived a very pre-modern existence. Her father was a Spanish soldier who was at home only at Christmas and on feast days, her family owned an Indian slave, and she did not go to school. Nearly half of the papers had at least brief passages of believable perspective taking.

CONCLUSION

Perspective taking was a difficult challenge for these 5th grade students. In neither assignment did the majority of the group manage to see the world through the eyes of a person from the historical time period in any meaningful sense of that term. The Indian assignment proved to be more difficult than the Spanish colonial one in this respect, which suggests that the more remote the period and culture, the more difficult the challenge. It became clear from the students' writings that perspective taking does not necessarily emerge full blown from detailed and contextualized narrative. In most of the students' narratives, the amassing

of exotic details about everyday life did not lead to an understanding that life also was structured in exotic ways. The students simply hung their factual historical information on a framework of assumptions borrowed from the present. This problem cut across the three language-proficiency groups. Students in all three groups had difficulty getting beyond the present. However, some of the students did succeed in some measure, with nearly half doing so with the Spanish assignment. That may be as significant as the fact that most of the students failed on one or the other of the two assignments.

Is it possible for 5th grade students with somewhat limited language skills to engage in perspective taking? This research suggests that at least some of them can. Language proficiency was a limiting factor. The seven students who were most successful with the Spanish assignment were equally divided between the two higher language proficiency groups. None of the lower-group students succeeded in either assignment.

However, the failure of many of the students to engage in perspective taking may have resulted from factors other than language constraints. It may be a reflection of the way the assignment was structured. The assignment called for writing a first-person narrative. The use of "I" rather than "he" or "she" may have strengthened the students' obvious tendency to read their own values and routines into the past. Perhaps a story written in the third-person would have been more successful. The anachronism of having a preliterate Indian character write a narrative also may have helped blur the boundaries between past and present.

The initial criteria for assessing perspective taking that the project had developed clearly was inadequate. It emphasized the importance of

contextualization through descriptive writing with historically accurate details. It assumed that students should focus on what had happened. The detailed contexts in which the students placed their historical persona may have put them at the threshold of perspective taking. But most of them could not step across. Detailed knowledge about shelter, clothing, and food were not very helpful for reconstructing either the routines of daily life or the world view of Indians or Spanish colonists. To step over that threshold, the students needed to do more than describe the people and their environment.

The project should have developed criteria that reflected a broader range of objectives. In addition to adequacy of contextualization or details about what happened, the criteria should have called for an understanding of how Indians went about doing everyday tasks. This requires an understanding of how materials and tools were used, but it also calls for insight into how the tasks of everyday life were viewed from within American Indian cultures. The students needed to be able to explain why the people behaved, thought, and interacted with the environment the way they did and why these aspects of life were different from today. Their writing should have been explanatory as well as descriptive.

The fault lies not only with the criteria, but also with the instruction provided the students. The students were only marginally successful in taking an Indian perspective because they had insufficient knowledge about how and why Indians did the things they did. The instruction that preceded the writing activities had exposed the students to the details of what people did. Very little time was devoted to how Indians performed the tasks of everyday life. Still less attention was given to the mind-set that the people brought to these tasks. History instruction designed to

help students engage in perspective taking must take a different tack than that which students conventionally receive. Instruction that has historical thinking as a goal should place greater emphasis on the underlying structures, processes, and mind-sets of everyday life.

As these processes were very different from those of today, instruction should also help students create distance between the past and the present. For example, Samuel's Indian narrative let us see a bit of the world through the eyes of someone from a different culture and time. He did this by placing his imaginary character at a considerable distance from himself, in terms of age, natural environment, and values. In other words, history teaching for historical perspective taking should focus more on the differences than on the continuities between past and present. Teachers interested in promoting this kind of historical thinking could do worse than adopt as their motto the quote from L. P. Hartley, which David Lowenthal abstracted as the title for a book, "The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there (Lowenthal, 1985).

CHAPTER 6

DOING HISTORY IN A FIFTH-GRADE CLASSROOM: WRITING AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE TAKING

A major shift in thinking is taking place in the teaching and learning of history. Increasingly, history teachers, teacher educators, and curriculum developers are viewing history "as 'an approach to knowledge' as well as 'a body of knowledge.'" (Shemilt, 1978). From the elementary grades up, more students are "doing history." That is, they are using historical evidence to write family history, to present the perspectives of people who lived in other times, and to construct their own version of historical events. It is comparable to a shift in perspective that is taking place in other subject areas as well. The movement toward a "thinking curriculum," as it is sometimes called, is fueled by recent developments in cognitive psychology and constructivist pedagogy, and by teachers' observations that the best way to help their students acquire knowledge is to engage them intellectually with the subject matter.

The British Schools Council 13-16 Project was the first major effort to implement a thinking curriculum for history in the schools (Samec, 1979). Initiated in the early 1970s, it approached history as an explanation-seeking, knowledge-constructing discipline and organized a four-year syllabus designed to explore different approaches to doing history. The project demonstrated that virtually all 15-year-olds adolescents were able to understand something of the nature of historical knowledge (Shemilt, 1980). Much of the recent theoretical and empirical work on historical

thinking and its implications for the history curriculum also has been done in Great Britain.

The implementation of a thinking curriculum in history has received a much lower priority in the curriculum reform movement in the United States. Here attention has been focused on questions of content selection and organization. Questions of scope and sequence, depth vs. coverage, and whether there should be national content standards have been the dominant concerns. One exception has been the efforts of the College Entrance Examination Board to promote discipline-based thinking in several secondary school subject areas, including history. However, the College Board's initiative in history education has thus far produced only modest results. These include a pamphlet on historical thinking (Holt, 1990) and a model course in world history that is in the planning stage.

The shift of attention to historical thinking has also raised fundamental questions about the nature of historical thinking and learning in school settings. What is historical thinking and are children and adolescents capable of doing it are certainly the most urgent of those questions. While these questions are far from being answered, certain areas of consensus have emerged. One is that historical thinking consists of a number of discrete cognitive processes, although history educators do not necessarily agree about what these processes are (Shemilt, 1980; Seixas, in press). It is also generally assumed that school children, even students in the lower elementary grades, are capable of doing historical thinking by engaging in at least some of these processes (Levstik and Pappas, 1987). Nevertheless, there are many questions that have yet to be satisfactorily answered.

One such question is the role of empathy in historical thinking and its implications for teaching history in the schools. Many attempts to define historical thinking include the concept of empathy or empathetic understanding as an element central to historical reasoning. In Great Britain, especially, the development of empathetic understanding has become a significant goal in the history curriculum. The goal is to enable students to project themselves imaginatively into an historical situation and to let them use their "mind's eye" to bring intuitive observation and judgment into play" (Portal 1987). However, empathy is also said to have benefits ancillary to historical understanding. The disposition to empathize and strategies for empathizing, Ashy and Lee suggest, "have an immediate importance outside history," helping young people "to make sense of comprehensive ways of life which at first sight appear alien and unintelligible." (65) In other words, historical empathy may have transfer value for civic and moral education, which might also give added stature to history as a school subject.

The role of empathy in history education is also a subject of some controversy. Empathy is an ambiguous term, as several scholars have pointed out (Boddington,1980; Knight, 1989). Boddington cites at least five different uses for the term in social studies education. These cover a spectrum that extends from largely cognitive to highly affective processes and outcomes. At one end empathy is a synonym for understanding others; at the other it seems to be used as "a rather mysterious way of knowing that goes beyond any normal modes of cognition" (p. 14). Knight (1989) argues that the term empathy is an obstacle to understanding. He sees it as a unitary construct that carries with it "the implication that there is a single, discrete operation, 'empathising', which the learner develops

over time" (p. 46). However, it is more likely children are engaged in a number of cognitive processes when they try to understand others who lived in the past. The focus on a unitary concept such as empathy may hinder the development of a more differentiated approach to understanding this aspect of historical thinking. Knight also points out that the ambiguity of the term is also a source of confusion to classroom teachers, who tend to confuse empathy with sympathy and substitute exhortations to "feel" and "imagine" for thinking. On the other hand, Ashby and Lee (1987) describe empathy is an outcome rather than a process. It is "where we get to when we have successfully reconstructed other peoples' beliefs, values, goals, and attendant feelings" (p. 63). Nevertheless, Knight is probably correct is assuming that most teachers do think of empathy as a process that engages students in affective identification.

The concept of empathy also presents assessment problems. Empathetic assignments are likely to involve a wide range of cognitive and affective objectives. The former include knowledge gains, historical accuracy, causal analysis, and synthesis. But far more problematic are the affective outcomes that seem to be part of empathetic understanding. It is difficult to evaluate activities that invite highly affective and individualistic responses. Boddington (1980) suggests that it may be inappropriate to determine in advance what is a good empathetic response. "Since both the response of the student and the perceptions of the assessor are grounded in different and unique experiences, it is quite possible that we might not recognize a 'good answer' when we see it" (p. 17). Whether appropriate criteria can ever be developed to assess the quality of

students' empathetic understanding in the affective domain remains an open question.

This chapter is a report on how the Writing to Learn History Project at the University of California, Berkeley approached the question of empathetic understanding in an elementary school history classroom.

THE RESEARCH AT HILL SCHOOL

In the spring of 1994, the Writing to Learn History Project conducted research in a 5th-grade classroom in Oakland, California. The school was located in the Oakland hills, which is an area of middle-class and upper-middle class homes. A 6-week unit of instruction on the events leading up to the American Revolution had been developed for the purpose of the research. It was a combined social studies-language arts unit that included a variety of writing activities. These included role-playing exercises, written critiques of conflicting accounts, the written paraphrases of primary sources, list-making to order events in chronological sequence, summary writing and the writing of an historical narrative. While the activities addressed a number of elements of historical thinking, three of them either focused on or gave major emphasis to empathetic understanding, which will be referred to hereafter as perspective taking.

The Writing to Learn History Project attempted to avoid some of the problems posed by the concept of empathy by defining the term in its most limited, non-affective sense. To emphasize the limited scope of the definition, the Project uses the term "perspective taking" rather than empathy. The meaning of this term is similar to what Boddington (1980) has described as a "weak sense of empathy," rather than a more strongly affective kind. "Such an activity," he writes, "might be seen then not primarily as a creative activity, but rather as a rational, intellectual

activity concerned with explaining actions, attitudes, and concepts which are alien to our own" (p. 18). To engage in historical perspective taking is to attempt to understand an historical character's frame of reference, without assuming that one can or need identify with his or her feelings.

While the term perspective taking avoids the problem of confusing empathy with sympathy, it is not entirely free from ambiguity. Historical perspectives are not "taken," in the sense that photographic images are taken. That is, they are not out there waiting to be discovered and recorded. Rather, the perspectives of people who lived in the past must be constructed on the basis of historical information and evidence. "Perspective construction" might be a more accurate term, but it is a much less felicitous one. The term perspective taking will serve the purpose adequately, so long as it is not misconstrued as a single or simple process.

Even when defined in this limited, cognitive sense, perspective taking poses a formidable challenge for young students and for the teachers who must assess of their performance. The challenge stems partly from the demands of the task and partly from the difficulty of the subject matter of history. Constructing attitudes and world views that are quite different from our own is one of the most difficult aspects of historical understanding. It is impossible even for specialists in a field of history to see the world as others in the past saw it because they cannot escape from the present. The difficulties such a task poses to young students can hardly be overestimated. Moreover, the problems that students face in acquiring any kind of historical knowledge are not simply miniature versions of the problems that historians face. "In part, this is because skills, knowledge and experience that serve as resources for the adult historian are not available to apprentices in the classroom" (Shemilt,

1980). That is one reason why expert and novice thinking in history represent differences in kind rather than in degree. Consequently, the task of developing criteria for evaluating historical perspective taking should be approached cautiously and without inflated expectations.

Evidence of successful historical perspective taking should include some indication that students realize that the past is different from the present. In historical thinking, explanations as to why events have certain consequences or why people saw things in certain ways are specific to time and place. The historian, Shemilt (1980) points out, reconstructs the past as a world distinct from the present. It is one of an infinite number of logically possible realities, each related to the present, but distinctly different. One must understand the past as a member of a set of logically possible worlds. Anyone who fails to grasp this point will see the difference between past and present as "the same sort of difference as that obtaining between two aspects of the present; that is, the past is seen as nothing more than an extension of and variation upon the present" (Shemilt, 1980). Any version of the past constructed upon such an assumption will likely contain what we have elsewhere referred to as structural anachronisms (Downey, 1994).

Secondly, perspective taking must be assessed in terms of the students ability to differentiate between past perspectives. Just as they should not assume that people in the past thought as we do, neither should they assume that everyone in the past thought alike. They should recognize that perspectives within a given historical context are relative, depending on the position and status of the historical actors. British officials and American colonists had quite different views of such tax laws as the Stamp Act. This should not be difficult for most elementary

students to understand, as it helps to explain why the two groups were in conflict. It may be more difficult for them to see different points of view as being equally tenable, rather than to assume that one side was right and the other side wrong.

While empathetic identification demands some degree of emotional commitment to a point of view, perspective taking requires a more detached position. It is difficult to see how students can easily detach themselves from a perspective in which they are emotionally involved. Only by holding each perspective at arm's length will they be able to shift from one perspective to another, a process that is critical to historical explanation and understanding. This is one point at which perspective taking and empathy, at least in the more affective sense of that term, seem to be at odds.

Thirdly, students should be able to invest the perspectives that they create with explanatory power. Historical understanding requires more than descriptions about how people in the past saw the world. It depends just as much on explanations of why they saw things as they did. Students should be able to account for the perspective they describe. Likewise, they should also be able to explain the consequences that resulted from of holding such a perspective. (Knight, 1989, p.45) That is, students should be able to use perspective taking to help them build links in the chain of historical causation.

Explanation in historical thinking is most commonly causal explanation. Perspective taking and causal explanation have a reciprocal relationship. In historical explanation, a person or a group's point of view can be seen as a causal factor of major significance. Understanding perspectives is a first step toward explaining human actions, and the need

to account for human actions prompts one to examine the perspectives involved. In other words, the causal links would seem to be difficult to make without perspective taking.

Fourthly, the perspectives that students construct must be grounded in historical evidence. It is evidence as well as historical imagination that connects them to a particular time and place. Students could easily imagine that the colonists who protested against the Stamp Act and the leaders of modern-day tax revolts had much in common. In fact, the colonists' protests have no modern-day American equivalent. Students will only be able to grasp that difference through evidence that the colonists complained not of high taxes, but of taxation without representation. It is the paucity of direct evidence that makes the more affective kind of empathetic understanding so illusive.

Finally, the perspectives presented by the student should be factually accurate. It goes without saying that accuracy is a quality highly valued in any historical account. However, accuracy alone is not a good litmus test for successful perspective taking. Accounts that have few factual errors may still be badly flawed by structural anachronisms. However accurate the perspective may be, the major assumptions underlying it may be more presentist than historical.

In assessing the students's work, the Writing to Learn History Project assumed that it should satisfy each aspect of perspective taking to some extent. It also assumed that success in pespective taking is not an all-or-nothing proposition. An histoical perspective constructed by fifth-grade student surely will be much less adequate than that of an historian who is a specialist in a field. The outcome may even differ in kind as well as in degree. That is, a student may well construct a world view for an 18th

century American colonist that might be more appropriate to some other historical period. But to the extent that the above criteria have been satisfied, the student has begun the task of perspective taking. The result may not be historically correct, but the student is headed in the right direction.

PLAYING THE ROLE OF LOYAL COLONISTS

The first of the three perspective-taking assignments in which the students in the Writing to Learn History Project were engaged was a brief role-playing exercise. It focused on three short quotes from American colonists dating from the period 1764-1765. . Each student received a hand-out that included the following statements:

"Are we not one nation and one people? We in America are in all respects Englishmen." (James Otis)

"We all think ourselves happy under Great Britain. We love...our mother country, and adore our king." (Francis Hopkinson)

"I rejoice in the name of Briton." (John Adams)

"The assignment was originally designed to provide baseline information about colonial attitudes. These quotes would help the students plot the changes in colonial attitudes that took place between 1765 and 1776. Although the three men would later become prominent Patriot leaders, they were still loyal British subjects at the time of these remarks.

The materials also became the basis for a brief perspective-taking assignment. After the students read the excerpts, the teacher conducted a discussion about colonial loyalties and attitudes prior to the dispute with Parliament over taxation. It focused on the obvious expressions of affection for Britain reflected in these quotes. Why did they feel as they did? In the course of the discussion, the teacher pointed out that Britain

in 1765 was the leading European power of that time. The colonists could well feel proud to be part of such a great empire. They were also delighted that the French had been kicked out of North America. Finally, the teacher pointed out that the British government had largely left the colonies alone up to this point. The students were attentive, with many of them engaged in the discussion.

With that by way of historical background, the students were given the following assignment. They were to write a paragraph about these comments from the point of view of a colonists of 1765 who shared Otis, Hopkinson and Adams's views. The paragraph was to explain why the three men felt this way? The assignment took only a single 75-minute class period.

PLAYING THE ROLE OF A BRITISH OFFICIAL

The second assignment focused on the change in imperial policies that occurred between 1763 and 1765. These included the Proclamation of 1763, the Sugar Act and Quartering Act of 1764, the Stamp Act of 1765, and the more rigorous enforcement of the Navigation Acts to collect import duties. These were the measures that provoked the first protests from the American colonists about violations of rights and about taxation without representation. The question was whether the students could defend these measures from a contemporary British point of view. This was a more elaborate assignment than the first. It took more class time preparation and a called for two written responses. The second assignment took part of 3 class periods.

The activity was introduced by a reading assignment that described some of the problems facing Britain in the colonies between 1763 and 1765. These included the need to pacify the frontier, where Indians were

attacking frontier settlements; to pay for the defense of Britain's expanded holdings in North America, and to recoup the revenues lost through smuggling. The students were then asked to pretend that they were British subjects living in England, who had been asked for advice about how to solve these problems. They were given some possible choices, although not restricted to these alternatives. The choices included 1) leave troops in North America to defend the new territory or bring the troops home to save money; 2) Get the money to defend the territory by taxing the people in England or get the money by making the American colonists help pay for their own defense; 3) drive the Indians out of British territory by force or order the colonists not to settle on Indian land; and 4) remove the import taxes and let the colonists trade wherever they wished or crack down on smuggling. They met in small groups to consider these and other possible solutions to the problems. Then responded individually in writing.

This activity was followed by a day spent examining how Britain did, in fact, respond to these problems. The students worked in groups to become experts on one of the policies referred to above [the Proclamation of 1763, the enforcement of the Acts of Trade and Navigation, the Sugar Act, the Quartering Act, and the Stamp Act]. They read relevant paragraphs from their textbooks, consulted other reference books, and looked at excerpts from more advanced textbooks that I had photocopied for them. The students took notes on what the policy entailed and the reason it was taken. Each group then reported to the class, either by giving a formal report or by performing a skit. They took notes from the reports of other groups.

The final activity was an individual assignment in which each student was required to write a letter justifying the new policies. It called for persuasive writing from the point of view of a British official in London, whose task it was to explain to the colonists why these policies were necessary and fair.

After the British official activity, the focus of the unit shifted the perspective back to the American colonists. The readings and primary sources emphasized that the colonists protested against the Stamp Act and other taxes subsequently imposed by Parliament because the taxes were imposed without their consent. The threat to their liberties, to their ability to control their own legislative destinies, was far more important to them than the rate of taxation. Thereafter, the activities in the unit traced the sequence of events from the Townshend Acts to the Declaration of Independence, giving about equal emphasis to the British and colonial perspectives. However, none of the writing assignments that they completed during this time called explicitly for perspective taking, until the culminating assignment of the unit.

PERSPECTIVE TAKING THROUGH NARRATIVE WRITING

The final assignment in the American Revolution unit called for the writing of an historical narrative. The students were asked to write a narrative to trace the sequence of eight events or clusters of events that took place between 1763 and 1776. This assignment differed from the preceding ones in several respects. It called for taking two perspectives into account, both the British and the colonial, keeping each in mind throughout the exercise. It also asked the students to explain the relationship between events as well as that between perspectives and actions and the connection between events. In other words, the assignment

invited them to explain why the events occurred in this sequence as well as to describe what happened. Finally, the students were asked to explain, when appropriate, the role individuals played in these events.

This week-long activity began with the construction on easel paper of an outline of the major events of the period. The students first used the outline to organize information that they had collected and filed in their history folders over the course of the unit. In their effort to fit everything in without creating too many headings, the outline went through several revisions. Outline revision was a whole-class activity that occupied part of several days during the early part of the activity. The final version read as follows:

1. Britain's New Policies
2. The Colonists's Reactions to the Policies
3. Britain's Response to the Colonists' Actions
4. The Boston Massacre
5. The Tea Act and the Tea Party
6. The Intolerable Acts
7. The Colonists's Response to the Intolerable Acts
8. The Declaration of Independence

To make the task of collecting relevant information for each heading more manageable, the students worked in groups to collect information. They then outlined the information on wall posters to make it easily available for the rest of the class. The "research" was very much a cooperative activity.

As the poster-making proceeded, the teacher reviewed with the students aspects of historical thinking that should be worked into their narratives. These were items that had been touched upon on several

occasions over the course of the unit, which were also posted on the wall on a large sheet . They included:

People Make History

People See Things from Different Perspectives

Events are Connected

One of the pre-writing activities was a review by each group of the headings in their outline from the perspective of these three elements. That is, the students responsible for each heading were asked to report which people had help shape the events in their topic, how perspectives had differed, and what connections they could see between their event and others on the outline. The students then spent four class periods writing first drafts. Many but not all of the students expanded, revised, and edited their drafts during the following week as homework.

RESULTS

TAKING THE ROLE OF A LOYAL COLONIST

Taking the perspective of colonists who were still loyal British subjects in 1763 posed a major intellectual challenge for 5th-grade students. This was evident from the very beginning of the activity, which was introduced by a discussion of how the students thought the colonists felt about being part of the British empire. Their responses during the discussion were almost entirely negative. The students assumed that the colonists would have "felt unfree," "felt trapped," "not liked it," and "not enjoyed being ruled by a king."

These responses had been foreshadowed by comments during interviews conducted with a sample of the students before the instruction began. Before beginning the unit, the investigator conducted 25-30 minute interviews with a sample of 12 students. The students in the sample were

selected with assistance from the classroom teacher to represent top, middle, and bottom students in terms of achievement and writing fluency. Several of the questions probed for what the students already knew about the American War for Independence. Although they had never formally studied this period of American history, it was evident that the students were not beginning this unit on the Revolution with a mind that was tabula rasa. They had quite decided opinions about British authority in colonial America. These included the following:

1) that the colonists were being "run by another country" and did not like it.

2) that the colonists did not have freedom because they were ruled by a king.

3) that the colonists could not "do as they wanted."

4) that the colonists "did not have religious freedom."

5) that the colonists wanted political freedom, but did not have it.

Collectively, these opinions reflected a stereotype of 18th century British authority as autocratic and of the American colonists as freedom-loving democrats who had always chaffed under an oppressive royal authority. They were interpreting the history of the pre-Revolution period through the lens of Declaration of Independence, the "reading the present back into the past" fallacy. As they had never studied the American revolution in school, they must have imbibed this view from the general culture, perhaps from the mythology that surrounds 4th of July celebrations.

In the discussion that followed, the students' reaction was one of puzzlement and confusion. The most puzzling aspect of the problem was Hopkinson's reference to the king. They did not see how the colonists

could feel good about being ruled by a king. It was an especially alien and repugnant idea to them.

The majority of the students had difficulty imagining that American colonists could have said such things. Their responses were guarded and skeptical. Some assumed that these three men were atypical; others that they had sold out.

"They probably don't do the kind of work requiring they must give most of it to the king. Or perhaps they're just trying to suck up to the king so they wouldn't have to pay taxes. I cannot put myself in one of those peoples places because I completely disagree with them." (Meghan)

"I think these men are saying these things because they are geting payed to say them." (Robert)

"If I say that I love the king, I wount have to pay my tax and I will be rich." (Sarah)

"I love my king because you are supposed to love and be loyal to your king." (Emma)

"I was getting money from Britian and rejoiced because of my richness. And I was greedy and did a job for Britian and they paid me for doing the job." (Jendai)

Still another student wrote only one cryptic sentence: "I didn't like the king."

A few of the students did conclude that as colonists had legitimate reasons for saying good things about Britain, even about George III.

"He was nice, loyal, smart, and maybee he was perfect for a king." (Joseph)

"The King might be a nice person and he is nice to John Adams and treats everyone equally." (Kaiya)

But these were their own comments, and not perspectives of 1765. As an exercise in perspective taking, the first activity was the least successful of the three.

TAKING THE PERSPECTIVE OF A BRITISH OFFICIAL

For the second activity, the students completed two sets of responses. The first were the solutions they proposed to the problems facing Britain in 1765. They were given alternatives to choose from or could make up their own. The second was the letter from the British official. The solutions that they proposed varied. Some merely endorsed one of the alternatives provided, which are described above. Others were more creative:

"Start punishing the colonists who smuggled imported goods, and force them to pay the taxes." (Anne)

"Put tax collecter on boats so people couldn't smuggle anything... Hire more guards." (Emma)

"They could stop taking the Indians land. Make the land more expensive." (Kaiya)

"The Indians and the British could sent [set] down and desid [decide] something like give have [half] of the land to the Indians and have [half] to the British." (Ali)

In every instance, the proposals took what was essentially the British government's point of view. No one proposed that Britain bring the troops home, raise taxes on the people in England or declare the colonies a free-trade zone.

In their role playing or letter writing component of this assignment, nineteen of the twenty-six students who completed it presented a reasonably persuasive arguments for the government's new measures.

Four students had difficulty getting into the writing, ending up with incomplete outlines or fragments of disconnected paragraphs. Three could not make the leap to the British perspective, but argued the opposite point of view instead. The nineteen who argued in favor of the measures were not equally successful in making their arguments. That is, there were observable differences in quality of perspective taking.

The results were not uniformly successful. Two students played the assigned role in a perfunctory way. They managed to act out the role without giving the perspective that accompanied it much thought. It was more of a game than an intellectual exercise.

"Let me get straight to the point. You know those new acts, I think there so great... The Quartering Act is marvalous. I love it, you should love it to." (Jendayi)

"You [will] love the Sugar Act. It will make more money and provide you more troops." (Robert C)

However, the other twenty-three students who completed the activity were much more thoughtful. As students, as well as in their role as British officials, several also recognized that multiple perspectives were involved and that points of view different from theirs could also be justified. They realized that their official view might not be very popular in the colonies. The characteristic mark of these papers was the recognition that the colonists might not like these new policies, but that they had to accept them for the common good.

"New laws have been made by the King of England. Laws that will help your nation grow bigger and stronger... Please help your country." (Vanessa S.)

"As we are deep in dept, as you well know, we have brainstormed a few taxes that will help us all out of our predicement.... All of these taxes are going to pay for the care of the troops protecting the colonies. These taxes will not only help us, but you will benefit from them as well." (Anne)

"The Acts are all fair and good. They will help both America, and Britain. These are very good rules. Everybody in Britain would appreciate your cooperation." (Meghan)

"This is a really good deal. These laws are fair and necessary. We know you probably don't like these laws but you have to go along with it." (Joseph)

The most difficult task that the students faced was to justify the tax increases represented by the Sugar Act and Stamp Acts. They usually did so by explaining how the new revenues would benefit the colonists.

" I know it [the Sugar Act] sounds horrible, but it is not. The tax money will be used to pay for the troops that help and guard you. If we did not have these taxes, there would be no soldiers to guard you and then, if their was an Indian attack, you might all be killed!" (Meghan)

"These acts...are a good thing because it will give the government money to pay for the troops food and drinks, the Indians won't mess with us any more." (June)

The majority of the students were able to present the official point of view and explain why, under the circumstances, it was a reasonable and fair position. That is not to say that any of the papers presented it adequately or as an historian who was a specialist on the period would have. They were much more solicitous of American feelings than George Grenville had been. There were other errors of fact. Many assumed that

Britain drew the Proclamation line out of a fair-minded concern for the Indians, whereas the act was motivated at least as much by Britain's desire to avoid the costs involved in Indian wars. As the United States government would discover in negotiating Indian treaties in the 19th century, there were cheaper ways to secure Indian land than fighting for it. The students also saw the Indians rather than other European powers as the major threat to British security in North America. However, these errors reflected a lack of historical knowledge rather than any lack of willingness or ability to entertain a British perspective. The hostility that references to the king had provoked in the previous activity was largely absent. Presumably, the background presented made the British government's perspective believeable, whereas loyalty to the king remained unfathomable. Or perhaps the students were willing to entertain a British perspective so long as it involved policy issues rather than questions of political loyalty.

PERSPECTIVE TAKING IN NARRATIVE WRITING

For this assignment, the students were asked to write a narrative history of the events that took place between the end of the French and Indian War and the Declaration of Independence. The students's principal task was to describe the sequence of events. They were also asked to examine the role of individuals in these events, present the perspectives of the actors involved, and, when appropriate, to make connections between events. In presenting the perspectives of the people involved, they were given wide latitude. They were not given a model for doing it systematically. They took this aspect of the assignment seriously, but none approached the task as if perspective-taking was an item on a list that had to be checked off for each event.

The students narratives that were collected after three class periods of writing varied in length and in quality. All the students were still in the process of writing a first draft. None of the drafts were yet complete. Six students found the writing to be such a struggle that they had barely got beyond a topical outline. Sixteen others had written at least one paragraph on most of the eight topics. Although their narratives represented work in progress, enough had been completed to see how they had approached the several tasks involved.

The papers of the sixteen students who had described the perspectives involved in at least some of the events varied considerably in terms of how fully the perspectives were developed. The most frequent references to perspectives were brief statements about how the colonists felt about British policies and actions. In some of the papers, it was limited to such descriptive statements as:

"the colonists didn't like this," (Tonesha)

"the colonists did not like it," (Mike)

"the colonists hated it," (Andre)

"the colonists got mad," (Joseph)

Meagerly descriptive and not explanatory, such statements have limited value for historical understanding. However, other students did write statements that were more extended and revealing. For example:

"The colonists really hated these polocis because they felt they should tax themselves." (Emma)

"A group of colonists got mad because of the fact that they had to pay extra money to get legal documents." (Kaiya)

"This law [the Tea Act] drove the American tea companies out of busness so most of the Americans hated this new law." (Shannon)

These students at least attempted to account for the perspective they were presenting.

Whether or not the students explained the reason the colonists felt as they did, they tended to use the perspective they had presented to explain what happened next. There were causal links, implied or explicit, between the colonists's frame of mind and their subsequent actions. The students whose statements were merely descriptive usually left it up to the reader to infer the causal link, as the following excerpts indicate:

"One of Britains New polocies were the Stamp Act. That was when you couldn't buy anything enless you had a stamp.... the colonists didn't like this. They went down to the store that provided the stamp and with the wood from the building and made a bon fire." (Tonesha)

"George Grenville had the idea for the stamp act. The colonists did not like it. There was a riot." (Mike)

"Parliament made the Tea Act. The Colonists hated it so they through a Tea Party by throwing all of the tea in to the ocean." (Andre)

"Colonists got mad, they boycotted the tea and then dumped it in the harbor, and that was called the Boston Tea Party." (Joseph)

In contrast, the students who wrote the more explanatory perspective statements also tended to be more explicit about the repercussions of that frame of mind.

"Parliament aloud [allowed] British [East India] tea shops to sell tea cheaper than what the American tea shops were selling tea for. The Americans were very upset so that led into the dumping of tea at the port of Boston. The colonists showed their anger by dressing up as Indians and going down to the port of Boston and dumping the tea off the ships." (Emma)

"The colonists responded strongly to the Stamp Act. They hated it!... Virginia wrote other colonies about how unfair the Stamp Act was. They said that only the colonists should have the right to tax the colonists. A popular motto rang out through the colonies. It was, "No taxation without representation!" (Ceinwyn)

Whether or not the connection was explicit, the students used perspective-taking to establish motivation and to build causal links.

While most of the perspective statements referred to the colonists, all but one of the sixteen students included at least one instance of a British perspective. These were most often included in either one or both of two places in their narratives. They typically presented the new imperial policies in the mid-1760s from the British point of view.

"Now Britain didn't like this [the Stamp Act protest].... They also put taxes on things like tea, paper, lead, and glass [and] they also stopped smuggling to save money which they badly needed." (Tonesha)

"They were losing money because colonist[s] began to smuggle and Britain needed the money. So they made new acts such as the sugar act which raised taxes on sugar. That's how they got there money." (Ryan)
The Boston Port Act of 1774 was also usually presented from a British point of view. This act of Parliament, which was one of the so-called Intolerable Acts, closed the port of Boston to shipping until the town paid for the tea it had destroyed in the Boston Tea Party.

"Britain [closed the] Port of Boston to <u>all</u> colonists merchants until the city of Boston payed back the East India Tea Company for all of its damage. The tea was worth <u>thousands</u> of dollars." (Meghan)

"The Boston Port Act was an act where parliament closed the port of Boston to all the colonists and their merchants until the city of Boston paid

for the tea that was dumped overboard by some angry colonists because that was like flushing down about ten thousand gallons of tea down the drane." (Emma)

The student narratives were also examined for passages in which the student shifted from one perspective to another. When such passages were found, the following questions were posed. Was the student able to remain sufficiently detached to present both perspectives as tenable positions? Was he or she able to explain how actions that are the consequences of one perspective lead to reactions by those who have different perspectives? In other words, could the student use perspective taking to help construct causal connections between events?

While nearly all of the students shifted from colonial to British perspectives once or twice during the course of their paper, only four of them managed to do so within the space of a paragraph or so. The following narrative shifted from one perspective to another in describing the antecedents of the Boston Massacre.

"They also mad[e] a new law called the Townshend Act of 1767. This was a tax on tea, paper, lead and glass. Britain was afraid that the colonist[s] would start a war about the new law so they sent the troops to Boston. This made the colonists very angray. But Britain guessed well. There was a fight in Boston on March 5, 1770." (Shannon)

Another student shifted perspectives in the course of a carefully reasoned explanation for the Tea Act of 1773 and the subsequent troubles in Boston.

"The Tea Act allowed the E.I.C. [East Indian Company] to sell their tea straight to the E.I.C. Tea shops in the colonies. this would make their tea a lot cheaper. Parliament thought that the colonists wouldn't be able to resist such a deal. How wrong they were. Colonists wouldn't buy the tea.

They knew that this would put the colonists' tea shops out of business. And they thought that if Britain could monopolize the tea business, couldn't Britain just as easily put other businesses out of business. So Britain's great deal turned into a flop. Nobody would buy their tea. From this great commotion arose what we know as the Boston Tea Party." (Ceinwyn)

In this instance, the shifting of perspectives creates a dynamic that carries the story forward. The differing points of view become the tug and pull of political conflict. In both of the above passages, the perspectives seem to be equally tenable. And in both, the taking and shifting of perspectives moves the account from one event to the next.

DISCUSSION

The results of the perspective-taking activities the Oakland fifth-grade classroom suggest a number of observations. One is that perspective-taking is a difficult task for fifth-grade students. Perhaps for that reason, brief perspective-taking assignments do not work very well. For example, the students' failure in the loyal colonist activity can be explained by both the difficulty of the assignment and the brevity of the activity. Asking the students to place themselves in the position of 18th-century monarchists was the most difficult of the three perspective-taking tasks. The information that they were given about the colonists political sympathies was clearly inadequate. They did not even know that the British monarchy was limited and not autocratic. Basically, the students were adrift in an unknown sea of 18th century political loyalty and identity, without enough information to find their bearings. The information was certainly insufficient to offset what seem to be tenacious stereotypes about British rule in colonial America. The students also had

inadequate time to do the assignment. Even had they had more information, they would not have had time to assimilate it.

The second assignment, the writing of the letter from the British official, provided the students with much more information. They knew that Britain faced serious financial problems; that standing armies cost money; and that the colonists would directly benefit from keeping British troops in North America. They also had more time for the second assignment, nearly three class periods instead of one. Given additional information and time, the students were more successful in constructing a believable perspective.

However, the point is not that adequate information and time inevitably produce successful perspective taking. The students were more successful in the latter assignment not because they had amassed a greater quantity of information. Rather, those who succeeded did so because they had sufficient information and time to account for the perspectives they are asked to present. They knew why the official thought the way he did. The most successful perspective-taking passages in the third or historical narrative assignment also explained why the colonists and the British felt or thought as they did. Perspective taking, it would seem, involves the construction of explanation as well as the description of a point of view.

The student writings in the narrative history assignment linked perspective taking and historical explanation in another way as well. The most successful perspective-taking passages in the students's narratives developed the perspective in order to explain subsequent actions by the colonists or by the British. By shifting from one perspective to the other, the most successful of these students were able to account for a sequence

of actions, one leading to another. They used multiple-perspective taking to explain causal relationships.

Still another observation is that perspective taking and language facility go hand-in-hand. Most of the students who succeeded in the narrative-writing assignment, the most complex assignment of the three--were among those whom the classroom teacher had identified as belonging to the top group in achievement and writing fluency. The students assigned to the bottom group were least likely to succeed in these assignments. This is not to suggest that history students should be divided into separate "historical thinking" and "fact memorizing" groups or tracks. It points rather to placing greater emphasis on language development, especially fluency in writing, in history instruction. When students are engaged in "doing history," in an elementary classroom, history is as much a language art as it is a social science.

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